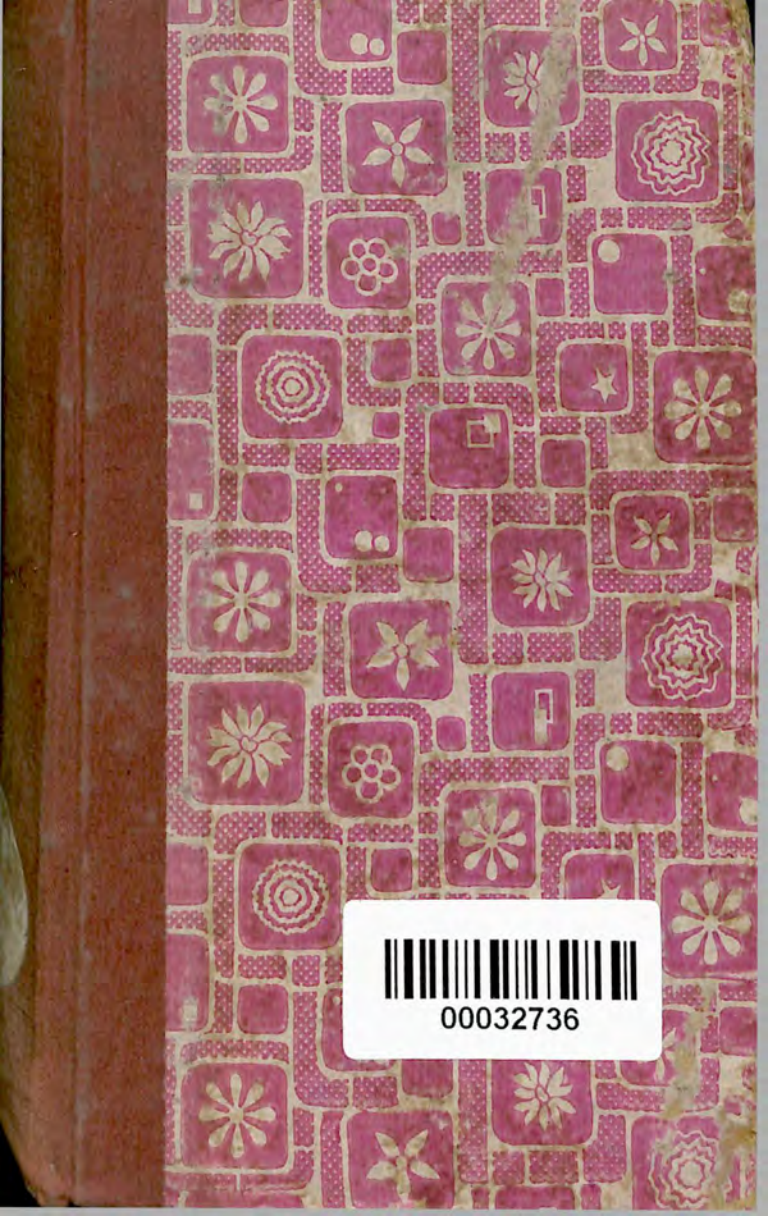
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THE PYRENEES

WEST AND EAST.

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C1

BY CHARLES RICHARD WELD

AUTHOR OF "A VACATION TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA"
"VACATIONS IN IRELAND" ETC.

"Let us go forth in summer's glorious prime,
And leave the din of cities for a while;
See that fair land where Nature's robes are steep'd
In brightest hues; and from the breezy heights
Of Pyrenean pinnacles, behold
Deep vales and forests, purple glens, and plains."

ANON.

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LONDON

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS

1859

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TO

MRS. ALFRED TENNYSON

This Volume is affectionately Inscribed

BY HER BROTHER-IN-LAW

CHARLES RICHARD WELD.

Burlington House,
May 1859.

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THE PYRENEES

WEST AND EAST.

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When the last strap is buckled, the last padlock locked, and the cab at the door to convey us to the Railway Station?—say, ye brother workers, do ye not experience under such circumstances sensations reminding you of the wild boyhood joy, when long-wished-for holiday-time arrived. Who indeed but workers can appreciate the feeling of independence when we are emancipated for a season from that life of wholesome labour to which, happily, the majority of

mankind are born? For how can the man ignorant of task-work have even a perception of the felicity of an annual holiday?

Welcome was the morning in summer's prime, when, with two months' vacation before me, and a purse comfortably filled with napoleons, I was whirled down to Newhaven, and crossed the Channel so swiftly that the London smoke still seemed to cling to me when I stepped on French ground.

I am not a fast tourist, so I passed the first night at Rouen, where I fell in with the Emperor and Empress, who were making an Imperial progress through the old Norman city, to the great delight of the multitude of citizen operatives. Their Majesties were doing homage to the Church by hurrying from fane to fane—nominally for devotion, but, as the Suisse of St. Ouen said, "Pour entendre un morceau de musique."—"Montez," said the concierge of the bell tower, as I emerged from the cathedral, "je vais sonner le Bourdon pour mon Empereur"—"car," he added, "nous sommes bien payés." So I climbed to the lofty gallery, saw the city under a brilliant sun, radiant with many-coloured banners flaunting from windows and triumphal arches, blue bloused workmen, and Norman peasants, threading the mazy streets like lines of ants. As I gazed,

the ancient tower vibrated beneath me, and the great Bourdon rang out its mighty boom. Descending to the bell-loft, I found thirty men stripped to the waist swaying the huge bell to and fro. This is hung within a cage of wood, which rocks when the Bourdon and the smaller bells are in full swing like a ship at sea. Hearing the grand and far-reaching tone of this fine bell, which is in a great manner due to the judicious manner in which it is hung, I felt vexed that our Big Ben loses a great proportion of its sounding power by being fixed when struck by the clapper.

The following morning I left Rouen early, passing through streets still throbbing with Imperial excitement, and availing myself of a *convoi de grande vitesse* to Paris, succeeded in catching the afternoon train from that city to Chartres. The setting sun was flooding the interior of the glorious cathedral with many bright colours, as I entered the building which is indeed the architectural pride of Brittany. The windows, 137 in number, are so charged with richly stained glass, that you are lost in wonder and admiration as you gaze upon the painted panes. Were I a citizen of Chartres, often in evening hours, when the great western window blazes with glory, would I smooth a ruffled spirit by the soothing influence of her cathedral.

And are the inhabitants of that ancient city insensible to the rare beauty at their very doors? Visit the cathedral, and you will say, from the great number of people seen there, that they are not. Observe them, however, and you will soon perceive that the attractions are not the perfect architecture, the rich and cunning sculpture, or the jewelled windows. A far more humble object, artistically speaking, is their joy and pride.

Within a chapel as gaudy as gilding and tawdry decoration can make it, stands a black image of the Virgin (miraculous stocks are generally black), clad in robes of great splendour properly crinolined, the anachronism of so extensive a dress not having entered into the imagination of the Virgin's fashionable milliner. This is the attraction of Chartres Cathedral to the dwellers in the city—ay, and to the dwellers without the city too, for is not *Notre Dame du Visage Noir* renowned for miraculous power? But she had once a narrow escape: for when certain revolutionists, in their iconoclastical zeal and fury, were about hurling the figure from its pedestal, in order that they might smash it easily, a bystander horror-stricken, and anxious to save the poor lady, who had apparently no power of saving herself, proposed as a good joke, that she should be crowned with

a *bonnet rouge*, and then be transformed into a goddess. The proposition met with hearty approval, was forthwith carried into effect, and the Black Virgin was saved.

And now all through the day, at early morn and late eve, groups cluster round the figure. The pillar on which it stands is polished by the lips of the faithful, who imprint kisses on the stone, and a busy trade is carried on in dips and bougies — dozens of which are constantly burning in the Virgin's Chapel. Alas, alas! that these things should be, exclaims the Protestant, thinking of the second commandment; for now it really seems as if the worship of the Virgin in France and other Roman Catholic countries, with all her new-fangled properties and attributes, was rapidly usurping that of the living God.

When you have feasted on the glories of the interior of the cathedral, the Suisse will show you a subterranean world of wonders, comprising crypts, chapels, and labyrinthine passages, or rather their entrances, for the greater portion of them have been recently closed by order of the Emperor. The principal chapel, or underground church, is hewn out of the rock, and occupies, according to tradition, the site of the Druidical Temple mentioned

by Cæsar. Here service is performed every morning throughout the year at six o'clock, and you are admonished to be silent, by the word *silence* inscribed in large letters on the surrounding walls. Needless admonition—for truly the place is not at all calculated to promote or inspire a desire to talk. The entire cathedral is vaulted; and I was conducted through passages, and into and out of chapels, some of which, by the way, contain curious oak chests and carved beams—until I cried stop—and was glad to exchange the murky gloom for the bright sunshine. It may have been that the contrast was great—but I never remember thinking gardens so charming as those surrounding the palace of the Bishop. Happy prelate! living in an excellent house, he looks upon loveliness in nature and art—for flowers of great beauty gem his lawns, and the glorious cathedral rises before him.

Are you a sketcher? Go then to the lower town, pass through the ancient, and alas, sole remaining gate, Porte Guillaume, and you will obtain some excellent subjects for your pencil, besides seeing the exterior of the cathedral to great advantage. Observe, while admiring the architecture, the curious effect produced by the scale-covered spires, which always appear to be leaning towards you from what-

ever point of view you look at them. One of the twin spires is nearly four hundred feet high, and is justly famous for its exquisite beauty.

I left Chartres at five in the afternoon, and journeyed in a small *patache* on its last wheels across vast plains, on which wheat sheaves stood in serried ranks,

"Like armies of prosperity,"—

to Toury, a station on the Paris and Orleans Railway. Here I caught the train, which conveyed me to the city of La Pucelle, where I arrived at midnight. Having previously visited Orleans, it was my intention to depart the following morning, but a little adventure ordered matters otherwise, — worth noticing, perhaps, as illustrative of the working of French police. On alighting at my hotel from the omnibus, my cloak and wrapper were not forthcoming, although I had seen them, and indeed, placed them myself in the omnibus. "*Soyez tranquille,*" said the landlord, they will be here directly. So, being very hungry, I sat down to supper, believing that my wrappers would soon make their appearance; but not so, — nor could I hear any tidings of them, although I inquired at the omnibus office and railway station. Now the landlord's manner

changed; and, so far from affording me any assistance in finding my cloaks, he treated my loss very slightingly, and even insinuated that I had arrived at Orleans cloakless. Under these circumstances, and seeing no prospect of the restitution of my property, I went the following morning to the *chef de police*, related my story to him, and he immediately proceeded with me to the hotel. There he questioned and threatened host and servants, without eliciting any important information; but, as we were going to the railway station, a *garçon* entered the *salon* with my cloaks over his arm. According to his account, they had been left in the omnibus. My belief was very different; and, indeed, I doubt much whether I should have seen them again had I not applied to the Police Superintendent, who, I am bound to add, was extremely courteous; so that if these gentry are occasionally a little inquisitive respecting your passport, they are ready and willing to render you good service should you require their aid.

From Orleans I floated down the Loire in one of those funny little puffing and panting steamers, honestly enough called *Inexplosibles*, but which are now, unfortunately for the tourist who loves the beautiful more than hot haste, put down by the iron horse which screams through Touraine.

We dodged all day between sand banks, their close proximity to our boat being apparent by rods stuck round their margins; so numerous and perplexing are these impediments to navigation, that a large staff of men are engaged by government to watch and buoy these shifting banks. To every ten men a portion of the river is allotted, and they are required to mark the shoals daily.

Tours was a notable colony of English with slender incomes, but cheap markets are no longer to be found there. The last revolution rooted out many of our countrymen, who have probably found that the vales of Devon and Wales are fully as economical, and perhaps more so, than Touraine.

I spent a day in Tours pleasantly enough, the only *contretemps* being a violent thunder-storm, which put me to flight just as I was about sketching the hermit's house in the *Rue des Trois Pucelles*. While sheltering in a doorway I was accosted by a girl, who courteously invited me to sit down within the house of her parents. Accepting the invitation, I found that the *fille* was the daughter of a cabinet-maker, who was plying his trade in an inner room, while her mother was adding grist to the family mill as a *blanchisseuse;* the room in which I sat being white with the result of her labours. We were soon deep in talk; and on discovering that I

was an Englishman, the girl informed me that she had served as lady's maid to a *dame Anglaise*,—"*Oh comme elle était belle,*" and "*gracieuse;*" and then followed lamentations that she had declined the lady's offer to take her to England when she broke up her establishment in Tours; for since her late mistress's departure she had never known a happy hour, and why? because the priests, who she declared held the souls of the lower orders in Tours in iron bonds, were extremely angry with her for serving a Protestant family. But she loved the Protestants for all that,—and above all English Protestants; and were it not for the pains and penalties with which she was threatened, she would abjure Popery. Thus ran her talk, until the storm clouds having swept past, I rose to depart, not however without promising, at the earnest entreaty of Julie, to remember that if any lady friend of mine desired a faithful maid, there was an honest-looking and dark-haired girl ready and willing to serve her.

Another pleasant day on the Loire brought me to Saumur. The river below the curious and perplexing tower of Cinq Mars flows under a succession of tufa cliffs, pierced by innumerable holes, entrances to human dwellings. These consist of chambers cut in the calcareous deposit, which admits of easy tunnelling,

and however uncomfortable they may be, they enjoy the advantage of being free from rent and taxes. Many of these singular habitations have remained in undisturbed possession of the same families for several generations. Beneath these cliffs runs the railway: use it on your way from Nantes up the Loire; but if you care to see the beauties of that river, descend it in a boat. The scenery increases in loveliness below Port Boulet. Vines clothe the hill slopes, and the banks are wooded to the water's edge. So fair was all around, that I wished the puffy little Inexplosible which bore me along, had not been so rapid. But fortune or the sand banks favoured me. For sweeping round a bend, the waters before us appeared in wild commotion, and ere we had time to avoid the shoal a harsh grating sound made us aware that we were aground; hard and fast too, and yet the steamer drew only one foot of water. The Loire in summer is in truth a fickle stream, fit only to be navigated by small flat-bottomed boats; or steamers like those on the Ohio, with one wheel skimming the water at the stern: cunningly devised craft, whose clever Yankee captains boast that they can navigate them across the country in the morning after a heavy dew.

In winter the Loire is too often a mad torrent, as

frequent inundations attest. It was amusing to witness the efforts made by our crew, accompanied by wild shouts, to float the "Vivide." All ordered by turns — sometimes all together, for the captain's authority was but little heeded—the vessel meantime settling deeper in her sand-bed. Seeing no prospect of reaching Saumur in time for dinner, I made the steward happy by ordering his best fare, and dined amidst the beauties of the Loire. At length the "Vivide" was floated off, and we voyaged without further mishap to Saumur.

This town, now rarely visited by tourists, as the Loire runs between it and the railway, contains one of the very best hotels in France—the Budan, where you will find many English comforts, and much English cleanliness. On these accounts, and for the sake of the charming view from the Hôtel de Ville, a curious old building near the Loire, it is worth halting at Saumur for a night; and if you are curious in military matters, you may see the famous École de Cavalerie, where some three thousand non-commissioned officers are instructed in their professional duties. I have rarely seen a finer set of men than those who were undergoing training at the time of my visit, and it is evident that no pains are spared to make the establishment highly effective. The youths

have a proper idea of their importance in the eyes of their countrymen at least, for they strut about the town with all the pride of unfledged heroes.

There are other sights at Saumur for the tourist, and a remarkable object within a short distance of the town which should not be passed over. This is the celebrated Dolmen of Bagneux, the largest and most perfect monument of the kind in France. Fourteen large slabs form a hall 64 ft. long by 24 ft. broad. The largest stones measure 24 ft. by 21 ft., and vary in thickness from 2 ft. to 2 ft. 9 in. To these Titanic proportions the structure is indebted for its very perfect state, for with the exception of one prostrate stone at the west end of the Dolmen, all the others are in their original positions. Enter the structure and observe how close the huge slabs are set to each other, and how well the four gigantic roof stones fit in their places. Altogether this Dolmen is a wonderful monument of the dark past; and wonder rises when we learn that the sandstones of which it is composed, although found in the district, are not met with in the vicinity, nor do they exist near the surface of the ground.

Nor is this the only Druidical monument near Saumur, for another exists not far from the town, composed of six slabs; and a vast number of stone

axes, flint knives, and spear heads have been found in the neighbourhood, and are now deposited in the museum at Saumur. But, indeed, all this part of France is rich in Druidical remains, which is to be expected, when we remember that the great Celtic Temple of Carnac, where the Arch Druid, with his attendant Vacerri, Bardi, Eubages, and Saronidæ, probably resided, is not far distant.

CHAP. II.

Poitiers. — St. Radegonde. — Her History. — Angoulême. — Limousin. — Chestnut Forests. — The Limousin Peasants. — Marguerite de Valois. — Blaye. — Up the Gironde. — Market Women. — Great Abundance of Fruit. — Approach to Bordeaux. — Hotel Touters. — Claret Cellars. — Curious Fungi. — Inauguration of the New Water Works. — Religious Ceremony. — Old Bordeaux.

He that commits himself to the public carriages on the cross roads in France must expect roughing, but on the other hand you see the country and mix with the people; advantages sparingly enjoyed by the railway traveller.

I journeyed from Saumur to Poitiers in a rickety diligence, which travelled at the very sober rate of about four miles an hour, and did not reach Poitiers until the clocks were striking eleven P.M. The next day I devoted to exploring the old town, full of historical interest to the Englishman; who with Froissart as his guide, may fight the battle of the Black Prince in imagination, when he visits the battle-field near Poitiers; abounding too in interesting subjects for the sketcher, who will find employment for a week

among the old churches alone. My note-book tempts me to gossip respecting some of these, but I must content myself with noticing one only to which full justice is not rendered by guide-books. Close to the cathedral stands a very ancient edifice, whose exquisite Byzantine tower, curious Romanesque choir, and quaint sculptures merit close observation. This church is dedicated to the Patron Saint of Poitiers, St. Radegonde, whose history merits passing allusion.

Daughter of Berthain, King of Thuringia, she was made prisoner and carried away captive, when only ten years old, by Clotaire, King of France. This sensual monarch, smitten by the great beauty of his fair prisoner, espoused her, although having six wives living; but his cruelty, tyranny, and sensuality soon caused Radegonde to hate him; and no wonder; for we read in French histories that this royal monster conceived a violent dislike to one of his sons, ordered him to be chained to a plank, scourged him with his own hands for an hour, and then enclosed him with his wife and children in a hut, to which he set fire. The devilish deed so scared gentle Radegonde, that she fled from her husband, sought the Bishop of Noyon, and implored him to place her in a convent. The prelate, fearing the wrath of Clotaire, refused to grant her request; but Radegonde would

not be denied; divesting her head with her own hands of her luxuriant tresses, she again saw the Bishop, who, moved at length by her importunities and sorrow, gave way; and under his protection she founded the church bearing her name, and the Convent of St. Croix, into which she retired. The Queen's piety and good works soon caused her to be venerated, and her fame became noised abroad, by her having been visited (so runs the legend) by our Saviour, whose footprint is shown on a slab in a small chapel called Le Pas de Dieu, attached to the church.

For fifty-four years Radegonde lived in the constant exercise of benevolence, and when she died, (August 13th, 587) her obsequies were celebrated with great pomp. To this day the peasants believe that her tomb possesses curative powers,—although her ashes were scattered by the Huguenots in 1562,—and the place of her sepulture is annually visited by thousands of devotees. The life of this good French Queen seems to have had a beneficial effect on her bad husband. Unable to wreak his anger on her, he was eventually moved by her piety, and his dying hours, according to his biographers, were spent in religious fears for the future; yet it is to be apprehended that ungodly thoughts prevailed, for his last words were "What mercy can the King of Heaven

show when he allows the great kings of the earth to die like common men!"

Angoulême, now accessible by railway, was my next halting-place. Soon after leaving Poitiers you obtain flying glimpses of chestnut-trees, which, as you proceed south, swell into wide-spreading forests. These trees, the glory of lovely Limousin, consist, for the most part, of the *chataigne verte*, producing a large and highly esteemed fruit, which, notwithstanding a great growth of corn, is still largely used by the peasants for food. The chestnut, indeed, is to the Limousin peasant what the potato is to the Irishman, very little meat being consumed by him.* Arthur Young, always a lover of good agriculture, condemned the practice of cultivating chestnuts on arable ground; but he admits that the Limousin peasant is well fed; and to this day you will find an abundance of *galettes*, a species of cake made from the meal of chestnuts, in every house, for this description of food is cheaper than rye, and in my opinion far better. Indeed, the

* Recent statistical tables show that the consumption of meat in Poitou and Limousin is below that of any other province in France. In the northern provinces, where the consumption is highest, sixty-four kilogrammes are annually consumed by each person, whereas in Limousin the consumption is only forty-one kilogrammes per head.

Limousin and Vivarais peasants, amidst their chestnut groves, orchards, and pastures, recall Virgil's pastoral picture in his first Eclogue, —

"sunt nobis mitia poma
Castaneæ molles, et pressi copia lactis."

Many chestnut trees in the Limousin attain a great size; but the wood, having the peculiar property of deteriorating when it grows old, is not much used for domestic purposes. It was long believed that the roofs of many of the cathedrals, and other large buildings, in France and England, including that of Westminster Hall, were supported by beams of chestnut. Buffon, however, showed that oak, after many years, assumes the appearance of chestnut, and Daubenton set the matter at rest by demonstrating beyond all question that what had been taken for chestnut is *Quercus sessiliflora*.

Angoulême, the capital of Charles the Fifth's province of Angoumois, now the Department of Charente, abounds with good subjects for the pencil, particularly the centre portion of the town, which is crowned by a grand old castle, formerly the residence of the Counts of Angoulême. In this massive pile Marguerite de Valois, who became Queen

of Navarre, was born, in 1492. She was sister of Francis I., who called her his *Mignonne*, and *Marguerite des Marguerites*, from the remarkable extent of her accomplishments. Remarkable, too, in many other respects, for she was called upon more than once by Pope Adrian VI. to aid him in appeasing national discords; and so successful was her diplomacy, that medals were struck in her honour, bearing honourable and laudatory inscriptions.

If not time pressed, you will do well not to enter Bordeaux by railway, but rather sail up the Gironde to that grand commercial city. Again committing myself to worn-out *pataches* and *charabancs*, I travelled from Libourne to Blaye, in whose gloomy fortress the Duchess of Berri was confined, after her narrow escape of being roasted alive at Nantes. Here I embarked in a small steamer plying on the Gironde for the convenience of the country people, who supply the Bordeaux markets. The boat was crowded with peasants. The women generally very pretty, wearing *marmottes* of gaudy colours coquettishly set on their heads; the men undressed beaver hats with immense rims. Charming groups for the figure artist as they stood amidst their baskets full of vegetables, flowers, and fruits; and such fruit, — melons, peaches, apricots, nectarines, figs bursting with lus-

ciousness, pears, apples, and a perplexing variety of grapes! Fancying some of these, I asked a girl, who stood over a basket full of the purple fruit, to let me have a bunch, at the same time holding out a couple of sous. My ignorance of the value of grapes in the Department of the Gironde was great; for, with an honesty rather embarrassing, the girl drew five fat bunches from her basket, and offered them as an equivalent for my money.

Opposite Blaye, and extending for a considerable distance up and down the Gironde, is the Médoc district, unlovely in appearance, being a vast plain composed of stones and sand, the deposit probably of the river in long past ages. But no smiling valley

> "Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
> And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,"

is so fruitful as this seemingly arid waste. For it is the nursing mother of those vines, which, stunted though they be, produce the far-famed claret grape. Who, ignorant of these facts, would suppose that an acre of Médoc land is a fortune!

Grand, indeed, is the water avenue to the great city of Bordeaux. Flowing beneath the softly wooded heights of Floirac, the tawny Garonne, here upwards of 2000 feet wide, sweeps in a semicircle past hand-

some quays three miles long, bearing all kinds of craft, from the jaunty felucca from the Mediterranean to the stately Indiaman; for the tide at Bordeaux, though the city is seventy miles from the sea, rises twenty feet. Looking at all this beauty and commercial grandeur, I thought of our Thames and what it might be, if properly embanked and provided with capacious quays.

I stepped ashore under a burning sun, at the Place de Quinconces, when all my admiration was quickly put to flight, by a rapacious crew of touters, who well nigh drove me to distraction, by their desperate efforts to carry me off to their respective hotels. Strange that so large a city does not possess better police regulations, but perhaps wholesome laws exist, though policemen may be scarce, or not where they are wanted; a fact Londoners in distress can occasionally endorse. Declaring in favour of the Hôtel de la Paix — the name was one of pleasant omen — I was triumphantly conducted to the hotel by its touter, while four of his attachés bore my slender stock of luggage. This hotel is situated at the bottom of the Rue du Chapeau Rouge, near the landing place of the steamers, and opposite to the exchange and theatre, and I cordially recommend it to the tourist, who desires to be comfortable on reasonable terms.

After indulging in a bath, I delivered some letters of introduction, which opened many generous houses to me, for the hospitality of the merchants of Bordeaux, and particularly of those whose names are indisputably connected with prime claret, is patent to all who have made their acquaintance.

Long to be remembered, is an afternoon which I spent at Floirac, where one of the great wine-merchants resides. After an early dinner, consisting of many delicacies, we adjourned, ladies as well as gentlemen, to an arbour in the pleasure grounds, situated at the edge of the wooded heights. Within the arbour a large table was covered with an endless variety of delicious fruits, all grown on the estate; and while we sat round these abundant products of this rich south, the distant views, which are of the most exquisite nature, were illumined by a sun-set of great glory.

On a day remarkable for an extra allowance of caloric — Bordeaux is consumingly hot in summer—I visited the far-famed claret vaults of Messrs. Barton and Guestier. Heavens! how delicious was the wine which I tasted in these delightfully cool regions — tasted! no, drank; for it would have been nothing short of an insult to that rare old nectar, to have acted according to the advice given, when you enter

the London Dock Wine Vaults — taste, but do not swallow. Here within the cool precincts of the cellars, if you have the good fortune to be favoured by being allowed to taste famous vintages, you will be made aware how little, how very little the middle classes know what good claret really is. The stuff which, impudently assuming that name, is generally our portion at a dinner party, is no more like the prime first-growth clarets of Médoc than sloe juice and brandy is genuine port; but when we remember that a hogshead of *good* claret, the produce of a first-rate vintage frequently fetches 1000 francs on the spot, lately much more on account of the grape disease — we, or at least *I*, who am of the middle classes, can understand that the chance of making acquaintance with prime claret is very small. The more then, if you are a middle man, will you enjoy a tasting visit to the Bordeaux Claret Vaults, and especially if you enter them after a lionising tour through streets baked with a temperature of about ninety degrees. I wonder was old Anacreon inspired by such circumstances, when he sang —

"Now the star of day is high,
Fly, my girls, in pity fly,
Bring me wine in brimming urns,
Cool my lip, it burns — it burns!"

Lighted by huge wax candles, that would have done good duty before other altars than those of Bacchus, I walked long and wonderingly through alleys lined by hogsheads, or *barriques* as they are called. The value of these as I was informed was 120,000*l*. There are generally 10,000 barriques in store, for the most part cobwebbed and venerable vessels, emitting a peculiar aroma, something like that of new hay; for your first-class claret requires to be kept many years before it is ripe for post-prandial honours.

The cellars where these are stored are occasionally infested by that very curious and formidable fungus, *Racodium*, which has a particular partiality for hogsheads containing ale or wine. If this fungus be left undisturbed, casks become swathed by its folds; but I apprehend that no *barrique* in the Bordeaux cellars is allowed to be played such pranks with by any mycological productions, as happened to a wine-cask belonging to Sir Joseph Banks. Sir Joseph, it is related, having a cask of wine rather too sweet for immediate use, directed that it should be placed in a cellar, in order that the saccharine might be more decomposed by age. At the end of three years, he ordered his butler to ascertain the state of the wine, when, on attempting to open the

cellar-door, he could not effect it, in consequence of some powerful obstacle; the door was consequently cut down, when the cellar was found to be completely filled with a fungus production, so firm that it was necessary to use an axe for its removal. This appeared to have grown from, or to have been nourished by the decomposing particles of the wine, the cask being empty, and carried up to the ceiling where it was supported by the fungus.

I do not purpose saying anything of the other sights of Bordeaux, for we have more undescribed objects before us than these; but, I must not leave the city without giving a slight sketch of a very pretty ceremony which I witnessed, and which threw Bordeaux into raptures. This was the inauguration of the Waterworks, and blessing the new fountains in the Place Quinconces. For many years Bordeaux had been inadequately supplied with water, though so long ago as 1789, a scheme was set on foot to remedy the defect. Civil disturbances, and want of funds, frustrated the carrying out of the plan at that period, and it was not until 1848 that the undertaking was fairly entered upon. The labour and cost were great; the plan being to divert the river Taillan into the city at an estimated expense of 1,800,000 francs. The work, however, has been

accomplished, and a grand fête was organised to inaugurate the opening of the fountains. A temporary altar was erected near the principal fountain in the Place Quinconces. Around this altar the troops quartered at Bordeaux were stationed, in such numbers and serried ranks however that the populace, for whom it might be presumed the spectacle was intended, must have found it extremely difficult to see the ceremony. At last, after several ineffectual efforts to obtain even a glimpse of the altar from the Place, I requested permission from a gentleman occupying an adjoining house to be allowed to stand on his balcony, which being courteously granted, I obtained a very good view. The proceedings commenced with high mass at the cathedral. At the conclusion, the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux, followed by his clergy, and attended by the Duc de Malakoff and a brilliant staff of officers, walked in procession to the temporary altar. From the upper step his Eminence addressed the assembly in an appropriate speech. Then he sprinkled the marble rim of the fountain with holy water, and uttering the words, *Benedicti Fontes Domine*, the sparkling water leaped high into the air with such vigour and abundance as to make one feel ashamed of our miserable Trafalgar Square squirts. The firing of cannon and burst of military

bands proclaimed that the waters were let loose, and now they might be seen bubbling from every fountain, and running in bright living streams through every street. The people rushed like children to see the welcome and lovely sight, crowning the fountains in many instances with wreaths of flowers and *immortelles*. The pretty *bouquetières* plied a thriving trade, for no French fête is perfect without an abundance of flowers.

French archæologists say, that you must see Bordeaux to form an idea of what the old city of Paris was. Not modern Bordeaux, where there is "*beaucoup de place pour peu de monde*," but the *ancien quartier*, with its narrow streets, motley inhabitants, and very quaint tottering houses. Among these, if partial to such relics of the past, you may spend many hours, particularly if you love to sketch architecture defiant alike of all laws and principles.

CHAP. III.

Leave Bordeaux. — The Railway across the Landes. — Nature of these Wastes. — Landais Proverb. — Landais Shepherds. — Attempt to Reclaim the Landes. — Imperial Patronage. — La Teste de Buch. — Pine Forest. — Arcachon. — Great Lagune. — Peculiarities of Arcachon. — Hôtel des Empereurs. — Bathing. — The Great Pine Forest. — Resiniers. — Products of the Pines. — Horses of the Landes. — Excursion to the Pointe du Sud. — Insect life in the Forest. — Cicadas. — Their curious Structure. — Advantages of Arcachon.

HAVING heard much at Bordeaux in praise of Arcachon, a small and peculiar bathing place, forty miles south of that city, I determined on spending a quiet week there before commencing my Pyrenean rambles. Accordingly I left Bordeaux early in the morning by the Bayonne railway. The construction of this railway is a great triumph of English engineering, for the work was attended with most formidable difficulties. A few miles from Bordeaux you enter the Landes, across which the line is carried to Bayonne.

Nothing more dreary than these apparently interminable wastes. Your passage across them suggests ideas of the ocean, with this great difference however,

that whereas the latter is rarely at rest, the vast tract of the Landes, comprising 600,000 hectares, equal to 1,482,600 acres, except when swept by hurricanes, presents a still and monotonous surface. The soil is sand—endless sand—vertically as well as superficially. Artesian wells have been sunk to the depth of nearly 1000 feet, and then a scanty supply of wretched yellow water has been the only result. As may be supposed, the lives of the inhabitants of this unpromising region are short, feverish, and sickly. The Landais have a proverb,

> "Tant que Lande sera Lande
> La pellagre te demande;"

said pellagre being a fatal disease occasioned by malaria and bad water. Amidst these wastes, lying to the east of the pine forests which fringe the sea coast, the Landais, who are, with few exceptions, shepherds, spend the long summer days with their flocks of sheep, each animal being as well known to them as their dogs. The Landais shepherd is a primitive being, fond of solitude, rarely venturing near the railway; when he does, he gazes wonderingly at the rushing train—so to see him you must penetrate into his wilderness. There, amidst the great wastes, clothed in sheep skins and wearing the Navarre cap, you will find him

mounted on tall stilts, become, from long habit, like a second pair of legs, for he has been accustomed to them from childhood; probably knitting while his flock crop the scanty herbage. There he stands, resting against his pole, a strange tripod-looking figure — stranger still when he strides across the Landes in hot haste after a wandering sheep. He has a small hut, sometimes a wife, who aids him in cultivating a small patch of ground, from which he obtains a little corn and a few vegetables. A miserable existence is this, but the dawn of brighter days has, we may hope, appeared for the poor Landais. After innumerable futile attempts to reclaim and fertilise portions of this desert, two joint-stock companies (Compagnie des Landes and Compagnie d'Arcachon) have succeeded in reclaiming a considerable tract of the Plaine de Cazaux. Sheltered from the prevailing west winds by the great maritime pine forest, of which we shall have something to say presently, the Plaine de Cazaux, situated to the east or leeward, as may be said of that forest, is not so liable to the destructive effects of the great sand storms as other parts of the Landes. Rice, tobacco, and the *topinambour*, or Jerusalem artichoke, for which the soil is admirably adapted, are the chief crops. The improvements are, in a great measure, due to a M. Pierre, an agricultu-

ral genius, who, having studied agriculture, and particularly drainage under scientific teachers, devised a system of reclaiming and husbandry which has been very successful.

Prosperity is rapidly following these improvements, and, what is better, malaria no longer poisons the reclaimed districts. The peasantry enjoy better health, and M. Pierre firmly believes that the terrible pellagre will be soon unknown in the Landes. His system has been approved by the Emperor, who has lately extended his patronage to M. Pierre by purchasing a large tract of the Landes, which is to be cultivated according to his method. The imperial estate lies to the east of Labouheyre station, and the Landais have marked their sense of his Majesty's advent among them as a landowner by erecting a pillar, surmounted by a gilt eagle, on the spot where the Emperor first entered the Landes.

An hour and a half's whirl through clouds of sand, and we came to a stand still at Lamothe, the junction station of the Bayonne and Teste Railway. Here we changed carriages, and continued our journey on a single line of rails to Arcachon. Soon we caught glimpses of the Atlantic, fringed by tawny *dunes*, and of the Bassin d'Arcachon. Teste de Buch, a small fishing town, is situated at the head of the

lagune, on the site of the ancient Testa Baïrum, founded 300 B.C. Traces of the Roman road between Teste and Bordeaux are still visible. A short distance beyond Teste, the railway plunges into the pine forest, through which it is carried by a deep cutting to Arcachon, or rather to a station in the middle of the forest. Here the scene is curious. Wild nature around, reminding one of an American backwood railway station; but, instead of sturdy emigrants, you see Bordeaux *élégantes*, with a sprinkling of Parisian fashionables.

Gaily painted omnibuses were waiting to convey us to Arcachon. Climbing to the roof of one, bearing the name of Hôtel des Empereurs, we drove along a sandy road, lined with pines, and came presently to the skirts of this new and peculiar watering-place.

Look at a map of France, and you will see the coast between Bordeaux and Bayonne indented with creeks, some expanding into large lagunes of fanciful shapes, the result of their shifting boundaries of sand. By far the largest of these *étangs*, as they are called, is the Bassin d'Arcachon, sixty-eight miles in circumference. Up to 1856, the shores of this inland sea were occupied merely by a few fishermen's huts. In that year some Bordeaux merchants, who

were staying at La Teste, appreciated the advantages of Arcachon, sheltered from the east by the pine forest, and possessing a strand admirably adapted for walking or riding. The bathing too is excellent, the water being sufficiently land-locked to permit the most timid or weak person to enjoy a bath, when it would be impossible to face the great sea breakers on the coast. Small villas were erected on the margin of the bay, and the example having been rapidly followed, Arcachon soon emerged from obscurity, and now promises to become a formidable rival to Biarritz. Fantastic as Chinese suburban residences are these little villas, which would most assuredly be demolished by the frequent storms, were they not sheltered by the pine forest. The Bordeaux merchants seem, indeed, to have vied with each other in building comical little boxes, in utter defiance of all architectural principles. Nevertheless, there is a great charm in these many-peaked and gabled gaily painted summer nests, set in gardens radiant with flowers and luxuriant exotic shrubs, happily ignorant of topiary art.

Having driven for half a mile on a road lined by these villas, the omnibus turned down an avenue, at the end of which was the Hôtel des Empereurs. The fact was announced by a scarlet flag suspended

from adjacent trees, and some such information is necessary, for the house has no appearance of belonging to the hotel genus.

Built of wood, it consists of an infinite number of subdivisions; considerable ingenuity having been bestowed in contriving that there should be a great choice of rooms,—not as regards size, but form; the purposes of a bed-room being apparently fulfilled, provided there is sufficient room for a bed. The landlord showed me an apartment—box rather, containing a very narrow bed, bowl, tiny table, and one chair; for this accommodation and board he asked ten francs a day——Too much——Mais, Monsieur, Arcachon is so full—three Counts in the house—and all the meat comes from Bordeaux.——But the room is so small ——What did Monsieur want with a larger room? And as for washing, was there not the sea within a few steps—gentlemen, and ladies too, went from their beds into the sea. However, ten francs was excessive and the landlord reduced the charge to eight, for which sum you may board and lodge at the best hotel at Arcachon; and I am bound to add, despite the box rooms, very comfortably. As the landlord said, it is the custom to go in *costume de bain* from your bed-room into the sea, which is close to the hotel; though, for those who may not choose to exhibit themselves

in this garb, there are bathing-boxes on the strand. Then there is an excellent *table d'hôte*, with an endless variety of fish, and a large drawing-room, where you meet everybody, Arcachon being yet without a Casino. Riding and boating parties are made up at the evening *réunions;* water excursions being in great favour, for the bay is always smooth, even when the sea outside is white with foam. So, if you wish you may enjoy gaiety and society, while, on the other hand, should you prefer a more solitary life, you may have it to your heart's content, spending the long and bright summer day with the fishermen, who will show you the amazing ichthyological wealth of the sea, or wandering in the pine forest. This indeed is the characteristic feature of Arcachon. The great pine forest of the Landes, locally called Pignadas, extends from the Adour to the Gironde, and is an extraordinary monument of man's skill and perseverance.

Prior to 1789 this vast forest area was —

> "A bare strand
> Of hillocks heaped from ever-shifting sand,
> Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
> Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds."

The sand was so fine as to be wafted by the faintest breeze, while the great sea storms raised huge sand waves, which overwhelmed vegetation, and, rolling

inland, frequently carried desolation and destruction among far distant villages and fields. Such was the state of this part of the country when M. Bremontier, an officer in the government department of the Administration of the Forests of France, conceived the idea of erecting wattled hurdles and boards near the sea, so as to break the storms; and sowing in narrow zones, leeward and at right angles to the prevailing wind, seeds of the *Pinus pinaster* and common broom, in the proportion of five pounds of the former to two of the latter per acre. The area sown was then covered or thatched with pine branches, care being taken to prevent these being blown away by pinning them to the ground. In about six weeks the broom seeds produced plants six inches high, which attained the height of two feet at the close of the year. These now afforded excellent shelter to the pine plants, which were but four-inch striplings, and under their fostering protection the pines grew and flourished, until at length, with an ingratitude not, unhappily, confined to the vegetable world, they suffocated their infantine protectors, and rose high, defiant of the raging sand storms.

So effective was M. Bremontier's process, that in 1811 a commission appointed by government to examine the Landes, reported that 12,500 acres were

covered with thriving and profitable pines; and the Landais, who had lived to see their howling wastes clothed with far-stretching forests, were enabled to gain a livelihood less precarious and perilous than that obtained by fishing in the stormy waters of the Biscayan bay.

Twenty-five years passed, and then the hand of man was busy among the pines. Good as the pinaster is for domestic purposes — La Fontaine says:

"Sera-t-il Dieu, table, ou cuvette ?"—

it is far more valuable for the great quantity of resin, tar, and lampblack which it produces. As you ride through the pines, you will meet the resin-gatherers, *résiniers*, as they are called, who, during the summer months, live in the forest; for the most part, a rude set of men, speaking a strange *patois*, from which, however, you may glean some information. When the resin harvest is at hand, the résinier goes forth provided with a short ladder and a curved axe. His manner of testing the fitness of a tree to be tapped is by throwing his arms round it. If the trunk be so thick that he cannot see his finger ends, the pine is ripe for the operation. This is performed with great quickness and dexterity. A longitudinal cut or groove is made in the trunk, down which the resin flows, and

is caught at the bottom of the stem in a little trough, fashioned in a few moments from the bark removed by the cut. Weekly the wound is reopened, but not widened; and the operation is renewed yearly, until the entire trunk is scored in such a manner as to make you wonder how the maimed bole can support the superincumbent weight. But, stranger still, the pine is not injured by this scoring process; for if the operation be judiciously performed, by the time that the résinier has gone round the tree, the first wound has healed, and the trunk is ready to be bled again. Wonderful too is the quantity of resin which exudes from these bountiful trees. You may know where the résiniers have lately been, by the balsamic odour proceeding from the wounded pines. A resin-gatherer told me that after a season's practice—from the 1st of May to the end of September—a good hand could score 2400 trees, scrape the *résine molle,* which incrusts the trunks, into the troughs with small iron rakes, and carry the resin to the pits where it is boiled. I saw a résinier frequently score a tree to the height of fifteen feet, and make a trough, in two minutes and a quarter. Such a proficient earns twenty-five francs weekly, a high wage in this part of France. Indeed the résinier is far better off now than the small vine-

yard proprietor, who, generally destitute of capital, is ruined by a failure of his crop. "How can a Kentish labourer be a hop-grower?" asked Arthur Young; and now that the vine is smitten by disease, we may ask: How can a small landed proprietor who is little above an English labourer with a good wage, succeed as a vine-grower?

When the pines have been scored and rescored, those destined to make tar—called *pins perdus*—are cut down. The tar, commercially known as *goudron des Landes*, not so good, however, as that derived from the Scotch pine, is made by burning the roots and thick portion of the trunk very slowly in cavities made in sloping ground, and the tar is caught in cast-iron pans, and run into barrels. An inferior kind of lampblack is deposited by the smoke of the wood, but a better description is obtained by burning the straw used in straining the resin.

Besides these products, the resin of the *Pinus pinaster* yields common turpentine, and is used extensively for pills. Glaring placards and advertisements at Arcachon further inform the visitor, that, "Sève de Pin Maritime est recommandée contre les affections de poitrine, catarrhes, bronchites," &c., by the French faculty,—a revival, by the way, in another form, of tar-water, whose virtues were extolled by

Bishop Berkeley long ago, in his curious book, entitled "Siris."

And even now the economical uses of resin are not exhausted; so the Frenchman did not exaggerate when he asserted that "résine est l'or en barriques."

Many and delightful were the hours that I spent in the Pignadas, generally on horseback; for the country around Arcachon is very favourable for riding, and the small Landais horses are excellent; Arab blood runs in their veins. Hear the first stanza of "Le Chanson du Cheval Landais:"—

"Le voyez-vous, fringant et leste,
Parcourir la grande forêt?
Avec lui, de Dax à Teste,
En un jour je fais le trajet.
Le sang arabe est dans ses veines;
Son trot est ferme et chaleureux,
Car il franchit dunes et plaines
Sans perdre son air courageux."

As all the *agrémens* of Arcachon are not yet chronicled in guide-books, I may mention that by far the most enjoyable excursion is that to the Pointe du Sud, about six miles south of the town. Start early, when the tide is ebbing, so that you may enjoy the fine broad hard sand. At the Pointe du Sud you have the mighty Atlantic before you, the great Biscayan waves breaking at your feet; while behind,

dark pines fringe the coast. Return through the forest; avenues, called *gardes-feu,* cut through the pines to prevent the spread of fire, extend to Arcachon; and when you are on the right track, you will do well not to stray from it, as it is quite possible to realise in these Pignadas the unpleasant feeling of losing your way, particularly when the sun has set.

Few places are more impressive than dark pine forests, — now screaming when the wind sweeps through the trees, and now filling the solitude with murmuring voices, when stirred by gentle breezes. And yet not a solitude; for as you pass through them in the noon-tide the air trembles with ceaseless hum. Pines are always a favourite home for insects; and here, in the warm South, they exist in countless multitudes, making even silence vocal; for, flashing through the air, or sluggishly basking in the summer's sun, they are endowed with the power of making the forest resonant with strange sounds. By far the most remarkable of these noisy animals is the Cicada, which attains a great size in the pine forests in southern France, and emits a loud sound; according to my observation, always increasing in intensity as the temperature rises. Xenarchus, the ancient mime poet, seems to have known that the faculty of sound is confined to the male, for he sings,

"Happy the Cicadas' lives,
Since they all have voiceless wives."

But is this insect the same as that which was so beloved by the old Greeks as to be thus apostrophised by Anacreon, "Sweet prophet of the summer, the Muses love thee, Phœbus adores thee, and has given thee a shrill song:" while other bards address it as the nightingale of the Nymphs. And surely the modern Cicada must be strangely changed in note from that which gave Eunomus the victory on the occasion of a trial of musical skill with his rival Ariston. The pretty story runs, that when these musicians were contesting for a prize at the Pythian games, one of the strings of Eunomus's cithara broke. Great was his despair, when a Cicada perched on the instrument, and, by its notes, supplied the deficiency. Strabo endorses the tale, for he states that there was a statue of Eunomus at Locri, holding a cithara, with his sympathising friend the Cicada upon it; and thus this insect perched upon a harp was regarded as emblematical of the science of music.

Far different was Virgil's conception of the Italian Cicadæ, of which he says —

"Et cantu querulæ rumpent arbusta cicadæ:"

and though their note is not quite powerful enough

to produce this shrill bursting effect, it is at all events sufficiently intense to make us marvel how so small an animal can make a noise so loud and continuous. Wonderful, most wonderful, is the machinery by means of which the shrill sound is produced. It consists of a kind of horny convex drum, attached to the abdomen in a very curious manner. This is suddenly expanded and contracted, producing an acute tone, further intensified by a beautiful arrangement of membranes. There are night as well as day Cicadæ. The former (Fulgoræ) are terrible noisy drummers in the tropics, where they are popularly called "Scare Sleeps;" and the traveller in Italy will associate night journeys in summer through that country with the shrill Cicada.

This slight sketch will suffice to show, that to those who love nature more than fashionable society Arcachon will prove an agreeable abiding place. But so rapidly is it emerging from a comparatively obscure fishing village to the flaunting prosperity of a gay sea-side town, that in a few years casinos, theatres, and all ingenious contrivances to kill time, excepting fatal public gaming-houses, happily interdicted throughout France, will be found at Arcachon. Already the Bordelais, proud of their creation, assert that "bientôt Arcachon dominera Biaritz."

CHAP. IV.

To Bayonne. — The Pyrenees. — Cork-trees. — Bayonne. — Huge Omnibus. — Passports. — A Clerk in Distress. — Biaritz. — The Bay of Biscay. — Villa Eugénie. — The Empress. — The Promenade. — Fashionable Parisiennes. — Fast Ladies. — Patches, and Patching. — Social Life in England and France. — The Imperial Prince. — Publicity of Biaritz. — Evening Amusements. — The Cliffs of Biaritz.

The most direct railway route to the Pyrenees is by the Bordeaux and Bayonne line as far as Dax, from whence diligences run to Pau. But as Bayonne is only thirty-one miles beyond Dax, and Biaritz, the pet watering-place of the fair Empress Eugénie, is but a short distance from Bayonne, I resolved on visiting these places before going among the mountains.

So I left Arcachon at eight in the morning, and, after a rapid transit across the Landes, had the satisfaction of seeing the purple Pyrenees stretching far to the west. The change from the arid sterility of the Landes to the prolific vegetation of the country round Bayonne is extremely striking. But the beauty of the landscape is much marred by groves of cork-trees,

whose blasted-like boles are sadly unpicturesque: venerable trees, for the most part, and therefore frequently barked, for it is a curious property of the cork-tree, that it flourishes all the better for being periodically stripped of its coat. The operation is performed every eight or ten years, and continued until the tree is about two centuries old, when signs of decay appear.

Presently semi-Spanish Bayonne was in sight, and in a few minutes more we came to a halt under the fortress walls in the suburb of St. Esprit. Here two omnibuses of vast capacity were waiting to convey passengers to Biaritz; not, however, too large for their requirements, as twenty-four persons were stowed inside each vehicle, and the same number clambered on the roof, perching themselves as they best could amidst a mountain of luggage, consisting principally of huge boxes.

What, you would have asked, can those dusty little women — plain for the most part — who occupied the interior of the omnibus, want with such enormous boxes, for to them did they belong. Wait until we arrive at Biaritz and you will see.

I secured a seat next the driver, whose dexterity in managing his team of five horses, as our ponderous vehicle plunged and surged through the narrow

streets, was amazing. "Have you no fear for your springs, or consideration for your horses?" I demanded. In the former he placed great faith; and as for the latter, I was soon made aware that they were fully equal to the task imposed upon them, for they set off at a canter, which they kept up until we came to the timber bridge over the Adour leading into Bayonne. Here strong gates bar the passage at night, and during the day you are reminded of being in a frontier fortress town by a rigid examination of passports. Four gendarmes surrounded our omnibus, and it soon became evident that any irregularity in a passport rendered the unfortunate owner of the troublesome document liable to detention — perhaps worse: for a fussy little Parisian, got up with immense care — Henri IV. barbe and moustache to match—who had been very anxious to impress us with magnificent conceptions of his own importance — an *attaché,* at least, you would have said, had you heard his big self-laudatory words — whose passport was not quite *en règle,* was ordered to descend from his elevated position on the apex of a pyramid of boxes; and failing to satisfy the police authorities respecting some alleged informality, was requested to walk with a gendarme to the *chef de police.* In vain did he expostulate and protest, affirming that he was only an

employé in a merchant's office in Paris, going to Biaritz *pour s'amuser*. The hard-hearted gendarmes had no mercy, and the poor little clerk was led off, sputtering with impotent rage between two stalwart representatives of the benevolent passport system of France.

Fancy, ye British quill-drivers, emancipated from your weary, dreary work for a brief period, looking forward joyously to a holiday at Scarborough, being stopped on the threshold of the scene of your anticipated pleasures by an officious policeman, and threatened with detention! Great, doubtless, would be your wrath, and deep the growl of indignation, that would probably find expression in a complaint addressed to the great recipient of John Bull's grievances. Alas! our Gallic neighbours have no "Times" to write to, and are not only obliged to endure oppressive police enactments, but also to bear them in silence.

"Allez!" said the gendarme, as the last passport was returned, and, greatly to our satisfaction, we were allowed to depart. Even the driver was pleased by the emancipating order, and the powerful team bounded under the exciting sound of repeated whip-crackings, executed with a *tour de force* peculiar to French Jehus. On, over the stony pavement, scat-

tering the curious Bayonnais who stood staring at our overladen omnibus crashing through narrow streets, shaving fruit-stalls, and on into the open country, through the Porte d'Espagne.

Charming is the drive to Biaritz — only six miles. Even on an omnibus you wish it were more. Southern vegetation drapes the walls of the villas near Bayonne. Beyond, there are undulating fields chequered with rich corn crops and various fruit trees, and to the south the Pyrenean range appears so near that you see the many-folded mountains, and can peer into their purple glens.

But soon the scene changes. For when you ascend a hill midway between Bayonne and Biaritz, the mighty Atlantic is full before you, and the rich vegetation becomes suddenly dwarfed. You would think that some magic influence were at work to effect so great and sudden a change. 'Tis the strong and stern west wind that sweeps unbroken across the Biscayan bay, before which vegetation cannot make head. Down, and up, and then the houses of Biaritz appear nestling in the wrinkles of the cliffs, where they have been wisely built, for the fragile cockneyish boxes would have but a poor chance of existence on unsheltered eminences.

And now we met various equipages, filled with

gaily-dressed women; and presently the Empress, emerging from the gates of the Villa Eugénie, seemingly enjoying freedom from Court state.

Biaritz was evidently very full, — a fact of which I was soon made sensibly aware, by being able to obtain but very indifferent accommodation in the large Hôtel de France. There was only one bedroom untenanted, and for this—a mere closet—and my board I was charged nine francs a-day. On stating to the landlord that this was more than I had paid at Arcachon, where provisions were dearer than they are at Biaritz, I was assured that Arcachon could not be ranked for a moment with Biaritz, which enjoyed Imperial patronage; that their Majesties, with a crowd of fashionables from Paris—not Bordeaux—were sojourning here; and, under these circumstances, nine francs a-day for board and lodging was not too much. Further argument, I saw, was useless; so I sent for my luggage, and, having changed my dusty travelling dress, went forth to see Biaritz, or rather the visitors; for the place itself is seen in a moment.

The favourite promenade is the narrow semicircular strand extending between the fantastic wave caverned base of the cliffs and the Villa Eugénie. The smallness of the space is in its favour, as the

French are a gregarious race, and like to jostle in a crowd. Here, when the tide serves for bathing, you meet all the visitors; the custom being for bathers of both sexes, in their *costume de bain,* to promenade before they enter the water. The scene is very French and very curious. Not in vain, as you will now perceive, were those capacious boxes conveyed from Paris to Biaritz. Their contents are displayed here as if their owners were in the Champs Elysées. You may moralise on the taste of a lady who decks herself in gaudy robes, gauzy bonnets, and the thinnest *chaussure,* to walk the strand of the wild Bay of Biscay. Enough that the fashionable Parisienne knows she has many eyes upon her,—sometimes, however, more than is pleasant; for while I was gazing at the gay scene, inquisitive and indiscreet blasts revealed more of the construction of crinolines and the ingenious machinery of ladies' robes than could have been contemplated by their wearers. It seemed to me that fashion had run mad at Biaritz, so out of character were the dresses of the women with the surrounding scenery. No wonder that French priests, having, perhaps, some feelings of compassion for husband's pockets, have commenced a pulpit crusade against extravagance in dress; not forgetting, among their admoni-

tions, to impress upon ladies that, while their gowns are very wide, the gates of Paradise are very narrow.

I had heard that a few fast—very fast—Parisian ladies, not satisfied by the revival of the robe fashion of the time of Louis XVI.—which, by the way, was initiated by the Empress Eugénie for a certain domestic reason,—had re-introduced the custom of wearing patches.

At Biaritz, where, unless my eyes greatly deceived me, fast ladies were not uncommon, I saw patches worn, not generally, but more than once; and shortly after my departure from that place I read in a newspaper the following particulars respecting the wearing of these fantasies, which I regretted not having known when I was at that watering-place. I give the French, because much point would be lost in a translation: —

"Sur le front, majestueuse—tempe, près de l'oreille, discrète—coin de l'œil, passionnée—sur le nez, effrontée —sur la joue, galante—sur le pli que forme la bouche en souriant, enjouée—au coin de la bouche, baiseuse —sur la lèvre, coquette—sur le cou, derrière l'oreille, tentatrice—sous le menton, provocante—sur le sein, friponne—sur un bouton, receleuse—sous l'œil, près du nez, assassine—au coin de la narine, mutine."

Should this patch-wearing become general, and

who shall draw the limit to fashionable follies, Napoleon III. may perhaps make patching subservient to his political interests. Addison tells us in one of his charming papers that the wearing of patches on various parts of the face was so managed as to have a political signification. Thus, while some women patched indifferently on both sides of their faces, others patched out of principle, and to such an extent was this whimsy carried that in a draft of marriage articles a lady, keen in politics, stipulated that whatever her husband's opinions might be, she was to be at liberty to patch as she pleased. Thus the political patch-mania became like a code of signals enabling parties to distinguish friend from foe.

The great difference between the social life of French and English is nowhere more apparent than at a large watering-place. In England we go generally to the sea-side to enjoy repose and quiet, whereas a visit to the coast is insufferably dull to our neighbours, unless gaiety and publicity are the order of the day. The sovereigns of the two countries are pertinent examples of this, for while our Queen is intrenched at Osborne, guarding herself at every point from the public gaze, Napoleon III. and his Empress live at Biaritz in full view of all who may care to watch their movements.

There are sites for a villa within a very short distance south of Biaritz from whence glorious views of the Pyrenees may be obtained, not overlooked by any house. But instead of selecting such localities the Empress chose a situation for the villa bearing her name, which is commanded by all Biaritz, and indeed so public is the Imperial marine residence that you may walk on high ground within a couple of hundred yards of the house.

The Empress, moreover, who is very fond of sea-bathing, which by the way the Emperor does not like at all, has her bathing tent within a very short distance of the public boxes, and her Majesty may be seen bathing by any one curious enough to walk the strand.

On the morning after my arrival I saw the young prince taken out for an airing. He was mounted on a jet black donkey, which was decked with artificial flowers, and covered with a red velvet housing. The child was also as gay as velvet, flowers, and lace could make him, and thus he was promenaded about in the most public manner to the amusement of all, and delight of those lovers of the Napoleonic dynasty who, judging by his very little cheeks and bright eyes, hope that he has a fair chance of battling, when time is ripe and claimants many, for his father's throne.

But indeed there can be no privacy in the grounds of the Villa Eugénie. Coaxing attempts have been made by the imperial gardener to make trees grow, but the strong west wind is too powerful to permit anything above the stature of shrubs to flourish. How the wind frets the Bay of Biscay, raising waves unknown in our channel, you may see and feel too if you are a good swimmer, and if you are not, and do not mind a little knocking about among the breakers, you may still enjoy a bath in the Atlantic by the aid of ropes extending between the rocks, from which depend smaller ropes, corks, and gourds. Sustained by these, and, in some instances by *guides-baigneurs*, men and women spend hours in the water, the latter wearing broad brimmed hats to protect their heads from the sun. Aquatic parties are often formed, and when the sea is not too rough flirtations are carried on amidst the breakers.

The evenings at Biaritz are devoted to all kinds of amusements in and out of doors. Balls take place at the large hotels, and fancy fairs, juggling, improvising and dancing are carried on within a few yards of the edge of the cliff, and within hearing of the grand and deep roll of the great waves which break below.

But the chief pastime during the residence of the Empress at Biaritz are the bull-fights at Bayonne

which may now be regarded as established under imperial patronage. At first they met with considerable opposition from the Bayonnaise, and were even censured by the clergy. A significant hint quickly silenced the obsequious church, and although the citizens of Bayonne have not yet acquired such a love for bull-baiting as to exclaim with the Spaniards that "Pan y toros" are the great necessities of life, yet it is evident, by the crowds that assemble to witness every bull-fight, that the sport has taken root at Bayonne. On the Sunday, this is the day always selected by the Empress for this amusement, prior to my arrival at Biaritz, a sad accident, occasioned by the fall of scaffolding, occurred. The performance was stopped, and many persons regarded the calamity as a judgment for encouraging the barbarous sport. Not so the fair Eugénie. "That angel from heaven," as she was called a few weeks before by the Rouen operatives, forthwith commanded another bull-fight, and the walls of Biaritz and Bayonne were covered with huge placards announcing that, on the following Sunday, twelve bulls would be killed in the most approved manner by the famous Espada - Julian Casas.

Greatly must we regret that so brutalising a sport as this should be encouraged by a woman filling the

high position of Empress of the French nation. She seems to be aware that the feeling of the country is against her, for in a work published under her patronage, entitled "Tauromachie," to be seen in every bookseller's shop in Bayonne, an endeavour is made to show that bull fighting creates and sustains a martial spirit. The degenerate Spaniards, who have bull fights constantly before their eyes, are evidence to the contrary. An attempt made some years ago to establish this sport at Paris, happily failed, but the love for it has extended, as I shall have occasion to show, beyond Bayonne.

I have said that Biaritz is soon seen. This remark, however, only applies to the town, for if you are fond of grand maritime scenery many excursions of great interest may be made in the vicinity, during which you will not meet with fashionable visitors, who, at Biaritz more than at any other French watering-place, herd together. To them the wild cliffs, with their fantastic water-worn caves, present no attractions. To what purpose would extensive dresses or sandalled satin shoes be exhibited in such unfrequented localities?

I cherish pleasant memories of a long day spent in an excursion to the western headland, from whence you can see far beyond the Spanish frontier. A path

leads out of Biaritz on the summit of the cliffs which slope sufficiently to enable a good cragsman to descend in many places to the creeks scooped out by the restless waters. In one of these, paved by firm hard sand, I enjoyed a delicious bath untrammelled by any *costume de bain*, which is of course *de rigueur* when you bathe at or near Biaritz. The scientific dredger might make rare hauls in the caves and creeks along this coast, for they abound in curious animals.

Seldom, however, can they be safely explored, as calm days in the Bay of Biscay are unfrequent, more commonly the sea swirls and tumbles among the rocks, dashing into the caverns and through the arches with thunder-like noise, and rising high in the air in magnificent *jets d'eau*.

CHAP. V.

Bayonne. — Its Advantages. — Commerce. — The Adour. — The Fortifications. — Vauban's Citadel. — Siege of Bayonne. — The Bayonet. — Warlike Preparations. — The Basques. — Abundance of Fruit. — Bull Fights. — Disgusting Scene. — Spanish Merchants. — The Place de Grammont. — Dax. — Curious Mistake. — A Travelling Acquaintance. — Guide through Dax. — The Amphitheatre. — Boiling Cauldron. — Mud Baths. — Antiquities. — To Orthez. — Luxuriant Vegetation. — Pyrenean Range. — Froissart. — La Belle Hôtesse. — Gaston, Count de Foix. — Castle of Moncade. — Festive Scene. — The Stalwart Knight. — A Tragical Story. — Peter Ernault.

BAYONNE, where I spent a day after leaving Biaritz, is a pleasant town possessing so many advantages that I wonder it is not an English colony. Provisions are abundant, and still cheap in comparison with prices at other towns of the same size in France; and should one of those little *émeutes* break out for which our Gallic neighbours are famous, or war with "perfide Albion" be declared, 'tis but a morning's drive into Spain.

Guide books talk of the extensive commerce of Bayonne, and laud the fine quays fringed with ships,

— all I can say is that I saw but one vessel, l'Immaculée Conception, loading with cork and wool, and beside her lay the Coligny, a small frigate generally stationed at Bayonne when the Emperor is at Biaritz. The paucity of shipping is probably due to the dangerous bar at the mouth of the Adour. Within the bar ships are safe, as the name Bayonne, derived from the Basque words *baia* and *ona*, good bay or harbour, implies.

Works are now in progress, having for their object the removal of this bar; but although the Church solemnly inaugurated the undertaking in the most approved Roman Catholic fashion, it is very doubtful whether engineering will triumph over the difficulties, which are extremely great.

Provided with an order to see the fortifications — without which hope not to pass the sentinels — I went over the fortress and citadel. These have always been famous, and now, with recent additions and alterations, are deemed impregnable; so that the motto of Bayonne — *nunquam polluta*, from its never having been taken, though frequently besieged — is not likely to be erased from its flag. The citadel is regarded by military authorities as one of Vauban's master works, but I am afraid that the sergeant who guided me through its perplexities

found me dull in comprehending the great military importance of the fortress. At least he quickly changed the subject, and finding that I was English gave me a detailed account of the loss — defeat he called it — sustained by our army when we invested Bayonne in 1814. As may be supposed, his relation was not remarkable for historical accuracy; but there is no doubt that our troops experienced a great reverse on that memorable occasion, no less than 800 officers and men having been killed, wounded, or made prisoners.

Apropos of war, the bayonet was invented near Bayonne, whence its name, by a Basque, who, when his powder was out, stuck his long knife into the barrel of his gun. Subsequently the French fastened the bayonet outside the muzzle of the musket, and greatly astonished our soldiers by using it, after having fired a volley upon them — a *tour de force*, however, which has been since frequently imitated with very great success by our troops.

Like all first-class fortresses in France, that at Bayonne is replete with all war munitions, ready, as my guide assured me, at a moment's notice, to open a thundering fire from heaven knows how many cannon. "Do you expect war?" I asked. "Dieu sait," he replied. One thing was certain, orders

had arrived to maintain the fortress on a war-footing, and the garrison was *au complet;* and so it seemed — soldiers flitting to and fro, drilling and gun exercising, all busy, and apparently ready to do battle.

I was anxious to make a sketch of a portion of the fortress; but the mere mention of drawing angered the sergeant so much, that I verily believe had I not promised to abstain from any kind of sketching within sight of the citadel, he would have arrested me on the spot.

'Tis pleasant rambling about Bayonne on a hot summer's day. Cool walks extend throughout the town, under stone arcades; and you may feast on many varieties of delicious fruits at the cost of a few sous. Good subjects for sketching exist in the town, —picturesque houses, with Spanish balconies and many-coloured cloths hanging over them to exclude the sun. The Basques, easily recognised by their ancient Iberian character, primitive costume, and fine physical development, are still frequently seen in Bayonne, particularly on market days, and the girls are generally very pretty. So if you are clever with your pencil you may obtain good groups in your foreground; but you must be quick, for the Bayonnais are shy, and do not approve artistic liberties; a

photographer would, I believe, come to grief among them.

Entering a bookseller's shop, I held a long conversation with the lady at the counter on the bull fights. She assured me that they were generally disliked, though the citizens, she admitted, went to see the bloody show. But lately they had been greatly shocked; for a poor horse which had been severely gored was ridden through the streets, with its bowels trailing on the ground, until the wretched beast's agony came to an end opposite to my informant's house, where it fell and died. "Ah, mon Dieu!" such a dreadful sight! Did the Empress in her *grande toilette*—twenty-three *jupons*—see that?

My companions at the *table d'hôte*—a capital one, by the way, at the good Hôtel St. Etienne,—were all Spaniards, for whom the considerate *chef de cuisine* provided savoury dishes, smelling of garlic and swimming in oil; however, I was not forgotten, and fared well on less oleaginous food. After dinner we adjourned to a *café* in the handsome Place de Grammont, and spent the evening *al fresco,* drinking coffee and chocolate, both delicious at Bayonne, amidst much smoke, guitar-strumming, and singing. Three of the Spaniards, who were merchants, spoke French fluently, so we discoursed *sub voce* on

politics; and I found that they esteemed their own country, sunk as it is, far more than enchained France.

I left Bayonne the following morning at six, and arrived at Dax at eight; thus having abundance of time to breakfast and see the town before the diligence started for Pau. Good fortune smiled on me in the form of a pleasant companion, whose acquaintance I made in a somewhat curious manner. When booking my luggage at Bayonne, I saw a very British-looking portmanteau, bearing the very English name, Henry Wilson, labelled Dax; so, feeling somewhat dull, and passengers being scarce, I sought and found the owner of said portmanteau. Breaking boldly through all conventional forms of introduction,—"You are going, I believe, to Dax?" No answer. Myself louder, imagining compatriot to be a little deaf,—"You are going to Dax, *Sir*, I believe?" Another shoulder-shrug, and a greater stare of surprise, were all I received in return. A shy man would have now beaten an apologetic retreat; but, having rubbed much with citizens of many countries, far-west Yankees among the number, my shyness was long ago rubbed off; so I renewed the attack, determined to solve my human riddle. Great was my astonishment when Mr. Henry Wilson,—for that

was his name, and I had hit the right man, which I at first doubted,—answered from a very English-looking mouth in pure French, "Sir, I do not understand you." "Oh!" said I, in French, "I beg a thousand pardons; but I supposed you to be an Englishman." His reply did not belie his countenance. He was delighted to make my acquaintance; was going to Dax—farther even,—to Pau; and he would be my *compagnon de voyage* with infinite pleasure: so we straightway became fast-friends. But how, curious reader, you will ask, came it to pass that said Henry Wilson knew no English? Precisely because he never learnt any. Born in Bordeaux of an English father and a French mother, he had never been out of France, and his parents did not care to give him a smattering even of English. So, having no aptitude or yearning for languages, he had arrived at middle life without knowing a word of our tongue; and he did not think that he was one whit the less happy for his ignorance.

But, though no linguist, he was far from unlearned; and I found my new acquaintance an agreeable and profitable companion. And now for Dax.

"Send us a person," said we to the landlord of the Hôtel Figaro, to which we had walked from the station through a deep stratum of unquiet dust,

"who knows Dax, and who can show us the notabilities, and particularly the Roman remains." Presently a full-grown *garçon* appeared, and having ordered a good breakfast to be ready on our return, we set out to see the town.

On, on in blazing sunshine did the *garçon* walk us over the stone bridge spanning the Adour, along the walls, until we came to a large amphitheatre constructed in the *fosse* with thick stout planks. Here our guide stopped, and, drawing our attention to the vastness of the structure, informed us that here were held the Courses des Taureaux; thus showing that, in his esteem, the scene of these courses, as he called them, was the chief lion of Dax. On my remonstrating against the cruelty of the sport, "Ah! monsieur, ici on ne tue pas les taureaux comme à Bayonne, on les enrage seulement."

To me by far the greatest curiosity at Dax is its huge boiling cauldron in the centre of the town. Fancy a kettle fifty feet square full of water in a state of ebullition — for the depth is about eight feet — from which clouds of steam everlastingly ascend mantling the town with vapour. Strong must be the fire beneath, and unlimited the supply of water which gives such results, for the temperature is 208°, and the water bubbles up so abundantly as to give birth to a considerable stream.

Looking at the spring it seems of crystalline purity, but when the water is at rest it appears of a faint *aqua marine* colour. This is caused by the growth of a plant locally called aïabaine (*tremella thermalis*), which flourishes in this hot cauldron.

Not uselessly does this amazing outpour flow. Adjoining the great tank, which is railed off, is a smaller basin in which all the dirty linen of Dax is washed, and other conduits lead the water through the town to the great comfort and advantage of the citizens. The very name of Dax, from *de aquis*, is suggestive of thermal springs. Close to the walls are mud baths much used for rheumatic complaints. "Ah! monsieur, c'est delicieux," said a gentleman, who had reclined in the mud for two hours, and saw us looking curiously at the thick and sulphurous smelling compound. We had unfortunately no time to experience the delight; so, instead of solacing our bodies, we cooled our throats with delicious grapes and peaches, piles of which were exposed for sale in the market-place at the price to us strangers of six large bunches of grapes for one sou.

Had the Daxians as much love for archæology as they have for their fountains, they would have

taken some steps to preserve the very interesting Roman remains, consisting principally of fortifications and city gates, which may still be traced in the structure of the standing walls. But it requires the eye of a good antiquary to detect all the ancient stones, the sole remaining vestiges of the *Aquæ Augustæ Tarbellicæ* of the Romans.

A peep into the large, old, and pleasantly cool church, terminated our pilgrimage through Dax, and we were well pleased on our return to the inn to find that the breakfast awaiting us fully answered our expectations. This eaten, the diligence was announced as nearly ready, and we took our places.

Greatly as the tourist in France is generally indebted to railways, there are districts where 'tis pleasant to find no iron horse, and where you may still travel in the banquette of a sluggish diligence, and survey the country at your leisure. The country between Dax and Orthez, without rising to the height of picturesqueness, is yet sufficiently charming to give you no desire to rush through it. The vegetation is most luxuriant. During our drive we saw vines hanging in festoons heavy with fruit, happily but little affected by the terrible oidium disease, —varied by rows of tamarisks and clear rivulets;

and to the south, the hills swelling into the Pyrenean range crowned by the Montagnes Rouges.

Orthez, where the diligence arrived at sundown, is a town of great antiquity and historical interest; now wearing a sober appearance, befitting its age, but not wanting in picturesque features. Indeed, so much was I struck by a charming bridge, bearing an ancient tower, mantled with creepers, which spans the Gave de Pau, and by the ruins of the famous old castle of Moncade crowning the town, that, having taken my place only as far as Orthez, I determined on sleeping there, a proposition immediately assented to by my companion. If horses failed on the morrow, 'twas but a walk to Pau.

Probably, however, Froissart had something to do with this resolve. I had been reading the knight's quaint old chronicles at Arcachon (you cannot have a better historical guide for the Pyrenees), and remembered well his description of Orthez, and of the court of Gaston Phœbus, count of Foix, who held great state in the Castle of Moncade in 1388. And the guide books say that the Hostel of Froissart, "La Lune," still exists under the sign of "La Belle Hôtesse."

So, having deposited our traps in the bureau, we set off in search of the said inn. It is a small house,

not professing to entertain travellers in modern hotel style; indeed, not at all solicitous to provide entertainment beyond a frugal repast, washed down by one or more flasks of good wine. Our desire to have beds was at first negatived by the *fille;* but after a little solicitation, the landlady, alas! not in looks a *belle hôtesse,* gave us a double-bedded room, in which Froissart may have reposed before he became the Count de Foix's guest. He remained with the Count three months, during which time he was most hospitably entertained, the Count giving him information respecting the wars between France, England, and Spain. Few historians have been so fortunate; for, says the chronicler, "Quand je lui demandais aucune chose, il me le disait moult volontiers; et me disait bien que l'histoire que je ferai serait au temps à venir plus recommandée que mille autres. Raison pourquoi, disait-il, beau maître, depuis cinquante ans en ça, sont avenus plus de faits d'armes et de merveilles au monde, qu'il n'était trois cents ans en devant."*

No wonder, basking under such patronage, that Froissart should occasionally break the thread of his historical narrative to gossip of the magnificence of the Count's court. And, wandering amongst the crumbling ruins of his once stately castle, with

* Chroniques, t. ix. p. 220.

Froissart as our guide, 'tis pleasant to rebuild in imagination the mighty walls, people the vast halls, see the rough stalwart warriors in their mailed pride, and hear the minstrels make music in the high places, the rafters echoing the song and loud laugh.

Here is a festive scene in the old castle. At eight o'clock, the Count, who had been bear-hunting all the day, entered the great hall, where supper was served. Lackeys went before him, bearing lighted torches, which were held round the table at which he dined, with upwards of a hundred lords, bishops, abbots, and knights. Down the hall were smaller tables, also lighted by torches, at which his squires and retinue supped: minstrels making music as the wine-cup circulated. Strong knights too were those who fought under the Count's banner. Froissart relates that, on a very cold day, Gaston went into the knight's gallery, and was angry, seeing the fire low. "What, ye lazy knights! having nothing to do, can ye not at least heap on wood?" Upon which, a knight, Ernauton d'Espagne, happening to look out of the window, saw a troop of donkeys in the court-yard, laden with logs of wood. Hastening down stairs, he seized one of the animals, threw it lightly (*moult legèrement*) over his shoulders, carried donkey and its load up the steps, twenty-four in number,

stalked through his wondering brother-knights, and cast donkey and wood on the smouldering embers in the wide-mouthed fireplace, to the great amusement and delight of the Count, who was right glad to possess so strong a man-at-arms.

But amidst all this carousing the old castle was the scene of many dark deeds, none sadder or more terrible than those perpetrated by Gaston himself who, if he was not, deserved to be one of the devil's choice ministers of evil. The deep dungeons were filled with his victims, and in the tall tower yet standing, he killed his son Gaston. Froissart recounts the tragedy in great detail, briefly it runs thus:—

The Count led his wife a wretched life, which gave her loving brother, the King of Navarre, great pain, and having tried fair brotherly means to make the domesticities run smoother, his majesty determined to put an end to his sister's woes by terminating the Count's life. The Count's only son Gaston, a fine handsome youth, who had just married Count Armagnac's lovely daughter called La Gaye Armagnoise from her great beauty, happened, unfortunately for himself, to visit the King when he conceived his murderous design. "Take this purse," said his majesty to his nephew, presenting him with a small velvet satchel, "it contains a powder which has the property of heal-

ing all quarrels. Wear it round thy neck secretly, and when thou seest thy father fall out with thy mother and ill-treat her, put a pinch of the powder on his meat. Take especial care that no one sees thee doing this. When done I swear to thee, my dear nephew, that thy father will never grieve thy mother again."

Those were the days of necromancers, and so the poor credulous youth carried home the purse, but before he had time to try the virtue of the powder, his bastard brother, Yvan, happening to see the satchel, demanded why Gaston wore it so constantly round his neck, and of what use was the powder. Failing to elicit a satisfactory reply, he informed his father of what he had seen, upon which the Count sent for Gaston, seized the satchel, called one of his dogs and gave it a pinch of the powder. The effect was instantaneous, the dog turned over and died. Seeing this the Count rushed upon his son and would have killed him on the spot had not the knights in attendance interposed, praying for mercy, for that the youth might be innocent. "Well," said the Count, sheathing his dagger, "he shall not die now, shut him up in the tower, and take heed that he do not escape." So Gaston was imprisoned, the Count meanwhile whetting his appetite for revenge by torturing to death fifteen

knights who attended on his son without extorting any confession from them.

Thus foiled he now determined to kill his son, but the story having been noised abroad, the bishops and nobles of his territory interfered; for, said they, Gaston is innocent, much beloved, and your only heir. Meanwhile poor Gaston pined in prison, refusing to eat the food placed before him. On the tenth day of his imprisonment the Count visited his son, having been apprised that he was starving himself to death. "Wretch," he exclaimed, putting a pointed knife to his throat, "wilt thou not eat?" The sudden fright caused young Gaston to start, the knife pierced an artery, and he bled to death.

But, perhaps, even a greater crime was the murder of the faithful knight Peter Ernault, to whom the Black Prince had confided the guardianship of his Castle of Lourdes.

Gaston with some difficulty persuaded Ernault to visit him at Orthez, entertained him as an honoured and esteemed guest, and then urged him to betray his trust, and place Lourdes in his hands. "Monseigneur," replied the true knight, "je vous doi foi et hommage, car je suis un pauvre chevalier de votre sang et de vostre terre, mais ce Châtel de Lourdes ne vous rendrai-je pas. Je le tiens du roi d'Angle-

terre qui m'y a mis et établi, et á personne qui soit je ne le rendrai fors a lui."

On hearing these words the Count drew his dagger, and, unheeding the unarmed knight's remonstrance,— "Ha! monseigneur, vous ne faites pas gentillesse — vous m'avez mandé et vous m'occiez," — stabbed him in five places, and then threw him into a dungeon, where he died in great agony.

CHAP. VI.

From Orthez to Pau. — Physical Sketch of the Pyrenees. — Their Extent. — Carriage Roads. — Ports. — Height of Line of Congelation. — Glaciers. — Cirques. — Oules. — Geology of the Pyrenees. — Primary and Secondary Formations. — Minerals. — Iron Mines — Zinc — Calamine. — Salt Mine. — Elevation Theory. — Fossil Shells. — Dislocations. — Thermal Springs. — Their Localities. — Granitic Formation. — Hot Springs of Aix. — Effects of Earthquakes. — Experiments on Springs. — Their Temperature. — Valleys. — Forests. — Plants. — Animal Life. — Bears. — Izzards. — Inhabitants of the Pyrenees. — Basques. — Bernais. — Roussillonais. — Vascons. — Cagots. — Their probable Origin. — Aversion to them. — Manner in which they were proscribed. — Descendants of Cagots.

THOUGH it is but twenty-two miles from Orthez to Pau, yet, as the road is flat and does not allow of that alternating play of the triceps extensor and flexor muscles so pleasant in pedestrianism among the mountains, you will do well to ride to the ancient capital of Bearn.

And while we are jogging on drawing near to the Pyrenees, whose serrated ridges powdered with sparkling snow are becoming more defined, it will not be undesirable to devote a chapter to some of the principal physical features of this grand mountain

range, under the shadow of which we shall be for many weeks.

Regarded in their largest extent the Pyrenees may be said to extend from Cape Creux, on the Mediterranean, to the Gallician coast, a distance of about 650 miles; but, by the Pyrenean range, is generally understood those mountains which divide France from Spain.

Silius Italicus, whose voluminous writings throw light on the geographical history of various countries, says:—

> "Pyrene celsa nimbosi vertice arce
> Divisor Celtis late prospectat Iberos
> Atque æterna tenet magnis divortia terris;"

and the Pyrenees are still the barrier between those two countries.

In a straight line these Pyrenees are about 280 miles long, 50 miles broad, and comprise an elevated area of about 1100 square miles. The maximum height is nearly midway between the Atlantic and Mediterranean, where the Maladetta attains an elevation of 11,424 feet, while several mountain peaks in the vicinity are but little below this elevation, and forty-five mountains are above 9000 feet in height.

The range is remarkable for its wall-like form indented by gaps or "ports," as they are called,

which give passage between France and Spain. Through about fifty of these the principal traffic between the two countries is carried on, the intricacies of many of them being only known to *contrabandistas*, who abound in the Pyrenees. There are but five carriage roads in the chain, all lying to the extreme east or west. The ports are generally higher than the Alpine passes, and present scenery of great grandeur. In consequence, however, of the Pyrenees being much more south than the Alps, and of their vicinity to the sea, the line of congelation is higher than it is in the Alps. This has been variously estimated. Ramond fixes it at 8600; Malte Brun at 8300 on the south side of the range, and 9266 on the north side; probably we shall not be far wrong if we assume 8700 feet, or 1300 feet above the line of perpetual snow in the Alps, as the Pyrenean altitude of perpetual congelation.

Thus, the grand glacial features which are characteristic of Alpine passes are frequently absent in the Pyrenees when you are even on elevations which in the Alps are covered with ice and snow. But glaciers, snow-fields, and drifts are not wanting in the high ports, where the weather is generally so wild, and the paths so bad, as to have given rise to the proverbs, — "In the 'port,' when the wind rages, the father waits

not for his son, nor the son for his father:" and "He who has not been on the sea or in the 'port' during a storm knows not the power of God."

A remarkable and very interesting feature in the Pyrenees are the basins — "cirques" or "oules" is their local names. They are situated in the transverse valleys lying between the buttresses of the principal range, and are generally surrounded on three sides by lofty walls of rock opening into the valley by a narrow gulley. The scenery of these cirques is peculiar, possessing much sublimity with great pastoral beauty.

The geology of the Pyrenees has not been as thoroughly investigated as is to be desired. Enough, however, has been done to inform us that the primitive rocks occupy but a very small portion of the chain. The arrangement of these differs very remarkably from that in the Alps and elsewhere where they burst out irregularly in the transition and secondary formations; whereas, in the Pyrenees, they run in bands or zones parallel to the chain. Thus, a very long granitic zone extends between Mont Perdu and the Maladetta, and other zones of primitive formation may be traced to the east and west of those mountains.

The secondary formations or transition rocks, of

which the great mass of the mountain range is composed, consists of argillaceous schist, schistose, and common grauwacke, and limestone. These formations contain some minerals, principally iron ore, copper, and argentiferous lead. The iron ore is found in a white saccharine altered limestone, principally in the eastern portion of the range. The iron mines, in the valleys and gorges transverse to the Val d'Ussat, have been worked for centuries, and still employ a large number of miners, but the copper and lead mines are abandoned.*

On the other hand, the quantity of zinc ores, and especially calamine, yielded by the mines near Santander within the last two or three years, has been very great. I may also mention that a remarkable deposit of rocksalt, consisting of two vast masses, one of which measures 250 yards by 130 yards, exists on

* The Baron de Dietrich, who devoted much time and labour to an examination of the mineral wealth of the Pyrenees, gives the following table of mines, which he visited in those mountains: —

	Silver.	Copper.	Iron.	Lead.
Comté de Foix .	3	4	32	2
Conserans . .	4	18	13	16
Comminges . .	10	16	16	18
Bigorre . .	13	9	13	45
Bearn . . .	7	25	13	16
Navarre . .	6	26	21	2

Many of them are no longer worked. The Baron states that he found iron in many parts of Roussillon.

the side of the mountain of Cardona, and is still worked.

French geologists formerly maintained that the Pyrenean chain rose "à un seul jet;" but recent investigations show that, notwithstanding the apparent general unity and simplicity of its structure, six, if not seven, systems of dislocation, each chronologically distinct, may be made out.

In great mountain chains the lower elevations are commonly composed of secondary and transition formations, through which the granite pierces, and forms the highest mountain peaks. In the Pyrenean system, however, the case is different; for the highest peaks of the chain are composed of marine calcareous beds, the organic remains of which are pronounced by eminent geologists, including Sir Charles Lyell, to be equivalent to our chalk and greensand series. Recently, moreover, it has been discovered that the most modern of the Pyrenean rocks contain the same description of eocene fossils as those found at Biaritz.

Solemn thoughts fill the mind when we reflect that the proud peaks of the Marboré and Mont Perdu are studded with shells which once lived in the depths of the ocean. Looking wonderingly at them, we seem to hear the words: — "Where wast thou when I

laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding!"

The dislocations in the Pyrenean system are intimately connected with the thermal springs; and as these form a prominent feature in the physical geography of these mountains, and possess high scientific importance, some account of the peculiar phenomena which they exhibit may not be unacceptable. Their number,

"Springing through the veins of the mountains,"

is extraordinary, no less than 253 being known, and there is a great and almost romantic interest in the fact, that they have for many centuries been ceaselessly pouring forth an almost unvarying quantity of water, for the most part of a high temperature, in some cases nearly approaching ebullition. Remarkable, too, is the fact that these waters, rising through vast earth and rock masses, undergo no change in their solid or gaseous composition. The same mineral-water medicine furnished in inexhaustible supplies centuries ago to our forefathers, still flows without change or stint. Well for poor drugged mortals would it be, if the apothecary, who

"Pestles a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights,"

were to imitate the honest constancy of medicinal springs.

No wonder that these should have been associated with lovely Naiades, in whose honour votive altars were raised by the Gauls and Romans.

Another remarkable property of thermal springs is, that their great heat should apparently not be due to direct volcanic action. Humboldt, whose researches into telluric phenomena are of high value, observes that even in the neighbourhood of existing active volcanoes "hot springs are least to be looked for," and certainly in the Pyrenees the warmest springs rise in districts remote from volcanoes, either active or extinct.

In India, too, according to Captain Newbold, the hottest thermal spring in that country is at Jumnotri, in North Hindostan, where there is no evidence of volcanic action. This spring, one of the most remarkable in the world, rises through the granite at an elevation of 10,849 feet above the level of the sea, and has a temperature of 194°, almost equivalent at that elevation to that of boiling water.*

In the absence of volcanoes, the wonderful phenomena of these perpetually hot flowing waters is probably due to the same agency that upheaved the granite through the axis of the Pyrenean chain; viz., some powerful elevating force, set in motion, perhaps,

* Phil. Trans. vol. cxxxv. p. 127.

by volcanic action. For the springs in the Pyrenees gush out at the junction of the primary and stratified rocks, where the strata afford evidence of having been rent by some violent convulsion, showing the closest connection between them and the disturbed strata, and at the same time bringing the springs into close proximity with the supposed cause of heat, volcanic or otherwise.

It is further worthy of notice, that, as we proceed eastward along the Pyrenean range, where the granitic formation preponderates, the springs are warmer than those rising in the western part of the chain.

Throughout the Pyrenees, the springs containing sulphur are found near the axis of the chain, whereas those containing little or no sulphur rise in localities at the base of the mountain-spurs on the northern side. But while these laws are general, the curious and perplexing phenomenon may be witnessed of springs, not only of a totally different mineral composition, issuing at dislocations within a few yards of each other, but also springs of highly opposite temperatures; as, for example, at Eaux Bonnes, where a perfectly cold spring rises close to one of a sulphurous nature, having a uniform temperature of 97°. And M. Arago relates a curious circumstance in relation to the famous hot springs of Aix, in Provence,

bearing on this remarkable phenomenon. A perforation was made close to one of those springs, when, greatly to the surprise of every one, only cold water rose, the effect at the same time being, that the warm spring was greatly diminished in quantity,—so much so, indeed, that legal measures were taken to compel the closing of the artificial aperture. When this was done, the hot spring flowed as before.*

These facts are brought forward by geologists to disprove the connection between thermal springs and chemical composition; but the whole subject is involved in great mystery. Beyond all doubt, mighty convulsions in the earth's crust have affected, not only the flowing, but also the temperature of springs. For example, the earthquake of Lisbon in 1755 raised the temperature of the *source de la Reine* at Bagnères de Luchon from 110° to 185°; and Humboldt ad-

* Bernard Palissy gives an interesting account of a spring near Pleinesselle in Provence, which was opened by a M. Rochas, son of the Inspector of Mines in Provence, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the water was warmer nearer its source. Palissy furnished the necessary tools, and here is the result of the works: — "Je fis continuer ce travail pendant quinze jours, au bout desquels je parvins à la source qui était chaude extraordinairement, et cette chaleur accompagnée d'une forte grande ébullition qui causait beaucoup d'écume. Alors en moins de trois heures de travail, la fontaine se trouva froide jusqu'au dernier degré, et tout autant que les entrailles de la terre le peuvent permettre. Cette eau avait aussi bien changé de gout que de chaleur et de qualité, et semblait être différente de sa première nature."—Œuvres, p. 678.

duces various instances of an increase in the temperature of springs from a similar cause.

It is also worthy of notice, that, in the Pyrenean chain, seismic action, contrary to the general law, is more frequent in summer than in winter, and the observed horizontal direction of the earth-wave is in the main line of the chain.*

If we could confidently assume that the temperature of thermal springs was due to internal heat in process of gradual cooling, we should have, by periodically ascertaining the temperature of warm springs, some data for ascertaining the rate of cooling. You will generally hear that the temperature of warm springs undergoes no change; that is, of abundant springs, beyond the influence of local circumstances, such as their being affected by alterations in the temperature of the strata through which they rise. If the thermometers employed by Carrère in 1754, and Anglada in 1819, who laboured long in investigating the Pyrenean springs, could be trusted, we should have some data for comparison. These gentlemen observed the temperature of the springs in the eastern Pyrenees, and the result shows that between 1754

* Of 656 earthquakes observed from the fourth to the nineteenth centuries inclusive, in France, Belgium, and Holland, 200 occurred in the winter months, 133 in the spring, 137 in the summer, and 186 in the autumn.—*Earthquake Catalogue of the British Association.*

and 1819 there was no decided variation in their heat.

More recently (1836) Professor James Forbes carefully noted the temperature of the principal springs in these mountains, and from the well-known care bestowed by that eminent philosopher on all experiments and observations, the temperatures recorded by him may be regarded as worthy of every confidence, and they will afford valuable data in future years when observations may be repeated.

I cannot pass from this subject without asking the tourist, when wandering through the beautiful Pyrenean valleys watered by these springs, and clear rivers, to remember that all the beauty around him is due to those tremendous dislocating and upheaving forces, volcanic probably, which changed the face of nature, and gave it that variety at once lovely to contemplate and useful to man. For if the great Cause were to upheave the centre of the Australian continent, in place of the arid sterility now prevailing throughout the greater portion of that vast region, which acts as an insurmountable barrier to human enterprise, we should have mountains and valleys, fertilising streams, lakes and rich alluvial soil with all those glorious features which mark a country where mountains alternate with plains.

The Pyrenean valleys are much lower than the Alpine; few being more than 2000 feet above the level of the sea, whereas those in the Alps are rarely less than double that height. Thus the mountains in the Pyrenees, when seen from the valleys, frequently assume a more imposing appearance than those in Switzerland of higher elevation.

In the valleys and on the slopes of the lower mountains a great quantity of Lombardy poplars flourish; as we ascend, Spanish chestnuts, oak, hazel, mountain ash, alder, sycamore, and magnificent birch trees abound. Higher still we come to the grand dark pine forests, which form a prominent feature in the western Pyrenees.*

There is indeed every reason to believe that the greater portion of the central and western Pyrenees was formerly covered by forests. In Bigorre many places were called *forum ligneum*, and Roman writers allude frequently to the thickly wooded state of these mountains. As late as 1670 the royal forests were estimated to cover 174,300 hectares, of which, before

* The Pyrenean forests are at present classified as follows :—

	Hectares.
Imperial forests . .	129,440
Communal do. . .	115,796
Private do. . .	123,000
Total	368,236

the close of that century, 51,300 hectares were destroyed by fire. Communal forests are those, however, which have suffered most from reckless cutting and general mismanagement. In the early part of this century there were thirty-one saw mills in the commune of the St. Gaudens at which trees were cut, abstracted according to the government report, from the royal forests. These mills are now suppressed.

The Pyrenean pines are varieties of the Pinus Sylvestris, frequently attaining a great size, though not so thick in the bole as the graceful stone pine. This tree never forms forests in the Pyrenees, and is only met with in isolated groups. The peasants have a reverence for the stone pine, or rather for the kernel. When this is ripe and split the cotyledons roughly resemble a hand, which they call "la main de Dieu," and believe that by swallowing the kernels in odd numbers as, one, three, five, &c., fevers and other maladies are cured.

The streams, not turbid like those in Switzerland, but clear and bright, which gush from every hollow and water every valley, impart an exquisitely bright verdure to the lower lands, nourishing at the same time an almost endless variety of lovely flowers. These are not, however, confined to the valleys for, like all

mountainous districts, the flora of the Pyrenees present an epitome of the vegetation from the equator to the poles, and botanists may like to be informed that in the valleys around the Canigou, and on that mountain a very large proportion of the flora of the Pyrenees may be found.*

Among the animals the bear (Ursus Pyrenaïcus), the izzard, a smaller variety of the *Ursus Arctos*, and the bouquetin are still to be found. With regard to the former the peasants have made so many successful attempts to divest him of his warm coat which they highly esteem, that he is rather scarce. The enterprising hunter may still, however, find him in unfrequented portions of the forests, and on the high mountains.

The bouquetin or bouc-stein, as it was formerly called — goat of the rock — is now rare in the Pyrenees. It is much larger than the izzard, has longer horns, set back and nearly straight, and is only found in the high mountain ranges. The izzard or chamois (*rupicapra*), for they are identical, is found in the lower zones, though, from having been much hunted during recent years, he is more frequently met

* Two botanists collected in this district during three days in June 5500 specimens. — See Catalogue des Plantes Indigènes des Pyrenées, par G. Bentham.

with in summer on the verge of the glaciers and snow plains, and in winter on the skirts of the forests. He lives on the most delicate herbage, and is very partial to aromatic plants. Where these abound the izzard's flesh has a peculiar, and in my opinion pleasant, flavour. But whatever may have been the description of vegetation forming his food, he is excellent eating. He is mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy as one of the beasts to be eaten by man, and the ancient Greeks are supposed to have known the chamois. Belon, indeed, says that the word is derived from the Greek kemas.

The Pyrenean peasants, as well as those of the Alps, assert that the chamois makes use of its hooked horns to surmount and descend precipices; but whoever has had the good fortune to see them leaping and bounding with unerring certainty from crag to crag, knows well that they are provided with far more powerful and effective means of locomotion among precipices than their horns could give. Though I have never hunted izzards, I have frequently watched them in the lofty Pyrenees, and have seen them through a telescope clear enormous spaces and alight on ledges where I could not have supposed it possible for a mouse to find foot-hold.

The inhabitants of the Pyrenees may be broadly

divided into three classes. The Basques, Bearnais, and Roussillonais. Of these the Basques are the most interesting, as they are descended amidst a variety of commingling races with scarcely any intermixture of foreign blood from the ancient Vascons. They originally occupied the country between the Pyrenees and the Ebro, and contrived, by leading a nomadic life when undisturbed, shepherds in peace, warriors when their liberty was in jeopardy, to escape the Roman yoke. The strong fortress of *Lapurdum* — now Bayonne — erected by the Romans, proved unavailing to bring them under subjection; and, when the Roman Empire crumbled to ruins, the Vascons not only succeeded in resisting the incursions of the Visigoths, but also those of the fierce Saracens, who made many attempts to deprive this proud and independent race of their liberty. And later, when the empires of France and Spain were founded, and this peculiar people were subject to the laws and influences of these kingdoms, they succeeded, though living in border land, not only to retain their pure Euskarian language, but also the customs and manners of their ancestors, thus affording to the ethnologist one of the most interesting studies in Europe.

The Basques are quick in quarrel, the hot blood of

their forefathers, often shed during the long and fierce wars which desolated their country, seemingly yet stirs in their veins. They are, however, easily conciliated. Both sexes adhere to the picturesque dress of their ancestors, and let us hope that they will long continue to do so, for the costume is at once graceful and comfortable. The tourist will remember with pleasure the contrast between the eternal hideous blue blouse in the north and centre of France, and the scarlet blue or white berret, rich brown jacket and red sash worn by the Basques and Bearnais.

Pleasant, too, when wandering through romantic Pyrenean land to find intelligence among the majority of the peasants that quickly finds expression, although frequently the tourist may be at a loss to understand the reply to his question when given in Basque or *patois*. Better this, however, than the disheartening bovine stare characteristic of the English rustic when requested to supply topographical information which he is either unable or unwilling to afford.

The Pyrenean men are generally fine and well formed, the mountaineers athletic, and remarkably free from pulmonary complaints. This is strikingly confirmed by the army medical returns; for, while

the ratio of rejections among recruits in the northern departments is 1116, that in the Hautes and Basses Pyrenees is only 140.

The women are also pleasing in appearance, but out-door work, and exposure to a variety of weather, renders those following agricultural pursuits prematurely old and unlovely. Unhappily, there are exceptions in both sexes to good looks; for in the Pyrenees, as in Switzerland and in the north of Italy, precisely where nature is loveliest are the people frequently hideously deformed by *goître* and other grievous diseases.

And here a few words may be said respecting the Cagots, or Argots, of whom strange and terrible stories are yet told by the Pyrenean peasants,—some maintaining that a small remnant exist in remote valleys, while all hold them in great horror.

That a race blasted by disease, proscribed and loathed by the inhabitants, did exist formerly in the south of France is certain. There is scarcely a village in the Pyrenees without its "Fontaine des Cagots," where the miserable beings were alone allowed to drink, and whose clear running waters are still regarded by superstitious peasants as defiled and impure. You are shown small doorways now blocked up in the church walls through which the Cagots were required to enter the house of God, distinct benitiers

from whence they drew holy water, and corners in cemeteries where they were interred. At Aix the leper's bath still exists, and to such a degree were these unhappy Pariahs hated that their very ashes were held to be cursed. The Pyrenean Cagot seems to have been analogous to the Cacou of Brittany; the Colibets and Cahets of Saintonge; the Marans of Auvergne, and the Caffos of the Alps.

The term Cagot is generally derived from Caas, Goths, dogs of Goths; but a more probable derivation is from the Celtic Cakod, signifying stinking, foul, or dirty; some etymologists conceive — for the word is a great etymological puzzle — that it comes from Cassot or Capot, meaning leprous. However this may be, it is certain that the Cagots were a dwarfish and hideous race of people. Accounts which may be relied on represent them as frightful and terrible to behold, and others probably less authentic describe their appearance and habits in words too horrible to be repeated. Much of this physical deformity was doubtless due to the dreadful manner in which they were compelled to outrage nature by marrying among themselves. The Estates of Navarre, as late as 1672, issued a decree ordering all Cagots, "De ne se marier point a ceux qui ne le sont point," and that there might be no chance of an unfortunate Cagot being unrecognised, the Estates of Navarre

and Bordeaux ordered that every Cagot should wear on the shoulder the distinctive mark in red cloth of a goose's or duck's foot. As usual when popular frenzy is uncurbed many families erroneously supposed to be tainted by Cagotism were proscribed, insulted, and oppressed. Patois songs have been preserved which show that these poor wretches were keenly sensible of the ban under which they lived. In one this stanza occurs, —

Quoique Cagots siam
Nous n'on dam,
Tous y em his de nouste pay Adam
Et de nouste may Permère.

Although we are Cagots, let us not be distressed; for all are descended from Adam our father, and Eve our mother.

And in another religious effusion a Cagot says, —

Lou praübe Cagoutou
Dab povu,
Coum dab raison
S'en ba enta l'Eglise
Couvert de confusion.

The poor Cagot goes to church overwhelmed with fear and confusion.

Such was the prejudice against Cagotism that all attempts to ameliorate the condition of these oppressed people were long fruitless. At length, however, the revolution of 1789, so disastrous to many,

proved of infinite service to them, for they took advantage of the times to destroy all the documents and monuments that they could find relating to Cagotism, and so effectually did they accomplish this work that by tradition alone is a family now pointed out as descended from Cagots. For, as I have said, although the Cagot laws are extinct, a strong feeling yet prevails in the Pyrenees against that race; and to this day, when a peasant is desirous of impressing you with the stupidity of a person, he says, — "Il est pire que le Cagot de Gamachie," — and a girl, eager to marry at all hazards, is said to be willing to wed "the Cagot of Gamachie himself." Who the Cagot of Gamachie was has not been ascertained, but we may safely presume that he was neither beautiful in body nor refined in mind.

Not, however, without some foundation are these prejudices still alive. M. Francisque Michel, in his learned and highly interesting work on this subject *, states that Cagots are to be found among the peasantry in many cantons in the Pyrenees, not actually deformed, but descended from Cagot families, and who are still regarded with such aversion by their

* Histoire des Races Maudites de la France et de l'Espagne. Par Francisque Michel. Paris, 1847.

neighbours that they will not contract marriages with them.

At Pau a document which escaped destruction during the revolution still exists, being a contract between a Cagot and the authorities of Lezons, to the effect that the former was held bound to empty certain public places; and at Lescun, as late as 1789, the same dirty work was the sole description of labour by which the poor Cagots were allowed to earn money. "Dieu te préserve de l'argent du Cagot," was a common saying, and, as we see, strong measures were taken to prevent any great quantity of coin being polluted by them.

Ramond states that he saw Cagots in the Pyrenean valleys: — "J'ai vu," he says, "de près, quelques familles de ces malheureux. Elles se rapprochent insensiblement des villages dont elles étoient bannies. Les portes latérales par lesquelles ils entraient dans les églises, deviennent inutiles. Un peu de pitié se mêle enfin au mépris et à l'aversion qu'ils inspirent. J'ai rencontré, cependant, des retraites écartées, où ces infortunés craignent encore que le préjugé ne les insulte, et attendent que la compassion les visite." *

Other authorities mention the existence of descendants of Cagots.

* Observations faites dans les Pyrénées.

At Mifagel, in the Val d'Ossau, a few years ago, a girl, sole daughter of a rich farmer, was shunned by all the young men because she was known to be descended from Cagots; and at Vielleségure, and in the valleys of Aure and Lavedan, families suspected of taint live in a state of isolation. Thus we can easily comprehend that the time is still distant when the word Cagot will cease to be a term of reproach in the Pyrenees, and that the wretched peasant afflicted with goitre and its accompanying woes will long be regarded as belonging to the "races maudites."

CHAP. VII.

Pau.—Ancient Béarn. — The modern Town.— Bernadotte.—Henri IV.—The Castle of Pau.—Statue of Henri.—Views from the Terrace.—Pau as a Residence. — Val d'Ossau.—The Gave de Gabas. — The Pyrenean Streams.—Eaux-Bonnes.—Hôtel Touters.—Les Cascades. — Le Valentin. — Pic de Ger. — Beech Forests. — The Table d'Hôte. — A strange Character. — How to make Verses. — The Water-drinkers. — The Springs. — Their Fashion. — Eaux d'Arquebusades. — Riding in the Pyrenees. — Equestrianism and Pedestrianism.—Their relative Advantages. — Hints to Tourists. — Les Eaux Chaudes. — Meteorological Influences. — The Gave d'Oléron.—Pic du Midi d'Ossau.—The Thermal Springs.—Mademoiselle de la Fosseuse.—The Bears of former Days.—Le Pont d'Enfer.—Goust.—Gabas.—Plateau of Bioux Artiques.

Pau is a town where the past and present jostle in rough contrast. Within the precincts of the old castle you are in ancient Béarn. The Béarn of Gavarret and Henri IV., the very carts drawn by big-limbed cream-coloured oxen, curiously harnessed, looking at you with large mild eyes from beneath a net bordered by red fringe, and their drivers, with their crimson or blue cloth berret and long goads, are in keeping with the scene. Pass into the adjoining streets, you are in a miniature Geneva, jostling

fashionably-dressed women who walk mincingly over the sharp-pointed stones.

With modern Pau, unless your investigations have a sanitary object, you will have little to do; perhaps you will care to see the house, No. 6, Rue de Tran, in which Bernadotte was born, who, though a follower of Napoleon, became a Protestant in order that he might ascend the throne of Sweden, thus reversing the act of his far greater fellow-citizen Henri IV., who abjured Protestantism for kingly reasons.

The castle where this monarch was born is the only notable lion of Pau, and happily the restoration of the ancient pile, judiciously effected by Louis Philippe, has not diminished its interest. I refrain from trenching on the privilege of the guide-books, in which all the curiosities of the castle, and they are many, are duly chronicled, but I am tempted to translate an inscription formerly attached to Henri of Navarre's tortoise-shell cradle, which, though still preserved, has somehow or another escaped Argus-eyed Murray: —

"Henry the Great was born in this apartment, a little after midnight, on the 13–14th of December, 1553. He was baptized by the Cardinal Armagnac. The kings of France and of Navarre were his god-

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fathers, a tortoise-shell was his cradle, and Suzanne de Bourbon, who was instructed to rear him as a gentleman's child in the Castle of Coarraze, was his nurse. There, going about bare-headed and bare-footed, his body was inured to bear the hardships of war. He took 200 towns, was present at 60 battles, being always the first in a charge and the last in a retreat.

"This hero was as great in his rule over his people as he was in victory over his enemies. An infernal monster deprived France of him on the 14th of May, 1610."

Full of the memories of the deeds of this mighty monarch, I went into the place bearing his name to see his statue, and was disappointed. The artist's work is good, but surely he has not caught the expression of the Henri of Navarre who led the cavalry when only sixteen at the battle of Arnay le Duc, fought at Cahors for five successive days and nights, "*fut de ses sujets,*" in the most comprehensive sense, "*le vainqueur et le père,*" and wished the poorest of his subjects to have always a fowl in his pot. The statue-king is, indeed, represented in armour, for of him might be truly said, —

> "La guerre est ma patrie,
> Mon harnois, ma maison;
> Et en toute saison,
> Combattre c'est ma vie."

But he wears a sad discontented expression, giving you the idea, as a Frenchman said, that "*il s'ennuie de Pau.*" Oh! what would we not give for sun-portraits of the world's real heroes. Truly our successors will be fortunate, for they will see the great men of our time as they are.

If the statue fails to satisfy, go on the terrace, see what nature spreads before you, and confess that here are no short-comings. That was a wise Prince of Béarn, who, in the eleventh century, drove a stake into the ground near this terrace, marking the site of Pau, and at the same time naming it Paou, which in the Béarnais dialect signifies stake.

The view from that lofty terrace is almost worth a journey to Pau to behold. In the foreground, a little to the east, stands the picturesque castle, surrounded by lofty trees; below flows the clear shining Gave, bordered by old houses, spanned by a time-worn bridge; beyond the river the Jurandon côteaux, celebrated for producing the wine poured down the baby-throat of Henri IV. by his sturdy grandfather, swell from the plain; and to the south, framing the rich landscape, further diversified by woods, churches, and ancient manoirs, rise the Pyrenees, crowned by the lofty and striking pinnacles of the Pics du Midi d'Ossau, and de Bigorre.

With such a charming prospect at your door, lovely walks and rides, and the comforts that have followed English colonisation, Pau is a pleasant town to live in; but do not expect to find it cheap, — more economical, probably, than Cheltenham or Leamington, but certainly dearer than many towns in the south of England. All who have resided here concur that a small family cannot live at Pau under 300*l.* a year; but where balls and parties are given weekly and hounds are kept, would it not be unreasonable to look for moderate charges?

I left Pau early in the morning in a small diligence for Eaux-Bonnes, twenty-three miles. My companions were all French, professedly invalids, though, judging from their volubility and high spirits, you would have given them a clean bill of health without a doctor's certificate. Our continental neighbours are very fond of trying the effect of the Pyrenean springs for all manner of ailments, mental as well as physical; and no wonder, for they are in the midst of delightful scenery.

About ten miles from Pau you enter the portal of the Val d'Ossau, the sporting-ground of young Henri of Navarre, where he strengthened his muscles grappling with bears. Val d'Ossau, by the way, signifies

Place of the Bear. Adieu now to level roads, for we are on the spurs of the Pyrenees, ascending fast, as you may see by the rapidity with which the Gave de Gabas flows past from the rocky mountain far above where the stream is born. Oh the beauty of the Pyrenean rivers! unpolluted by alluvial soil, they retain throughout their bounding course crystalline purity, reflecting as they flow varied hues from sky, scar, and wood, studded with moss-clad rocks, and fringed by lovely flowers. The road runs parallel to the brawling stream, retreating occasionally from the bank into the recesses of magnificent birch and chestnut woods.

Few places are more singularly situated than Eaux-Bonnes. Viewed from a distance, you are puzzled to understand how the houses can find standing-room in the wedge-like ravine containing them, and your surprise will not be lessened when you reach the smart little town. Fancy a section of a bustling Paris street peopled by a curious mixture of gaily-dressed women, black-robed priests,—these gentry swarm at the Pyrenean springs,—prosaic bourgeois, Spanish and French peasants, the former wrapped in capacious brown cloth cloaks, the latter wearing the picturesque berret, cavalcades dashing to and fro, lumbering charrettes and big oxen, and you have Eaux-

Bonnes. Every house is an inn,—a fact of which you will be soon made aware by the waiters, women as well as men, who test your patience and strength of garments in their endeavours to appropriate your person and baggage, and carry both off to their master's hotel.

I declared for the Hôtel de France, where, for a bed-room and *nourriture*, eight francs a day was demanded and seven taken. The bargain struck, I set out for a ramble, unheeding the numerous offers from guides to conduct me to Les Cascades. Indeed, you cannot go wrong, for walks zig-zagging up the mountains through the woods lead to the various points of view. The most picturesque fall is the Valentin, which sweeps down amidst great rocks in a very striking manner. But the remarkable features of the walks round Eaux-Bonnes are the mountain forms, particularly that of the grand Pic de Ger, the dark pines and the patriarchal beeches. The huge roots of these trees assume the most fantastic shapes, vying with the branches in length and thickness; you might imagine that the trees had been half torn from the earth by Titanic force, and that the roots were writhing in agony.

On my way back I fell in with troops of gaily-dressed visitors, returning at full gallop from their

afternoon's ride, setting at utter defiance the order prohibiting equestrians entering Les Eaux-Bonnes at a gallop.

"Let the traveller," says the Verulam sage, "sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travels." This advice may be carried out at Eaux-Bonnes, for you will meet but few English there, and this applies to the Pyrenean springs generally, for they are still far less accessible than Switzerland, and, unlike that country, which you may take *en route* to other parts of Europe, the Pyrenees form a kind of *cul-de-sac*.

The *table d'hôte* dinner was a wonderful culinary performance, and I find honourable mention in my note-book of roasted izzard and mountain strawberries, large dishes of which were set before us. After dinner we walked on the "Promenade horizontale," so called because it is the only level walk in the place. Then followed a réunion, at which music and dancing, cards and conversation winged the hours. No invalids there, or if there were, they obligingly put off their ailments for the evening; but strange characters among them, and one who merits a hasty sketch.

He was addressed as Le Comte, and was a

sexagenarian Parisian sybarite. I met him in the afternoon, sitting on the roots of a beech close to the town. He had a large portfolio open on his knees, a pencil in his hand, and when I first caught sight of him he was gazing at the Pic de Ger in a manner that led me to believe that he was an artist. But as he was seated in a most unfavourable position for sketching, I made bold, being addicted to that art, to see what he was about. My curiosity was soon satisfied. Starting from his seat, Monsieur Le Comte exclaimed, in an angry tone, "Ah! sir, you have destroyed my inspiration," "car je fais des vers." I begged a thousand pardons for having interrupted the poetic flow, venturing at the same time to suggest that his inspiration would be less likely to be disturbed if he communed with nature at a greater distance from the town. But this did not at all coincide with his notions of making poetry, which were certainly so original as to deserve record.

Having succeeded in smoothing his ruffled plumes —(Frenchmen, I have always found, are like wine, they mellow with age) — he proceeded to tell me that he made a journey every year to *les eaux*. "For your health?" Not at all; *pour faire les vers;* because at *les eaux* he procured comforts without which *les vers* would not flow, and then the springs

were set in lovely scenery. "You are fortunate," I broke in, "for the country here is truly beautiful." "Yes, sir; and judge if my *vers* are not *bien beaux*." And he drew from his large portfolio, embroidered with roses surrounding a coronet, *des vers*, which he proceeded to read until I made an excuse, and escaped the further infliction of hearing vile French *bouts-rimés* platitudes.

I met the count many weeks afterwards at the railway-station at Avignon. He remembered me, and was pleased to find that we were going by the same train to Lyons. But we did not travel in the same carriage. I took a second-class ticket, while he patronised the first-class carriages, in which, being quite at his ease, he could make verses *chemin faisant*. Altogether he was a very original being; but we shall meet many oddities before we leave the mountains.

The following morning I was roused early by the water-drinkers. 'Tis a golden rule at all *brunnens* to drink the waters while the dew is on the grass, which involves early rising, — a salutary proceeding very properly insisted upon by *les médecins des eaux*, and cheerfully obeyed by the water-drinkers, who, however, too frequently attribute virtue to the waters which more properly belongs to the total change in

their manner of living. For if fashionable Londoners and Parisians, who, with an energy and determination worthy a better cause, resolutely set to work at the beginning of the season to lay in a stock of disease by over-eating, over-excitement, and spending midnight hours in close unwholesome rooms, were to do a little justice to their much-abused body, half the *brunnens* would be deserted.

The only water drunk at Les Eaux-Bonnes is that issuing from the cold spring; the other springs, possessing a temperature of 91°, are used for bathing purposes. All are sulphurous and highly esteemed for pulmonary complaints. French physicians place great faith in these waters, which, however, have their seasons of fashion like those of other thermal establishments. A celebrated French doctor is reported to have recommended his pupils to send their patients to Les Eaux-Bonnes for a certain complaint, while the waters were in repute for the malady, and we know that they were formerly employed to cure wounds, the maimed soldiers after the battle of Pavia having been sent there, whence the waters were long called *Eaux d'Arquebusades*. Chronicles add that they were cured, as they deserved to be, seeing that they drank twenty-five glasses every morning; whereas now, in these degenerate days, two

or three are deemed a sufficient dose. Indeed, you are recommended to be sparing in even tasting the water without previously consulting Monsieur le Médecin, — a recommendation which, however, you will not trouble yourself to follow, unless you purpose drinking the waters medicinally. Pastilles, made by evaporating the water from the Montmorency springs, are sold; but, in a report by an official commission, you are warned not to meddle with them.

After an early breakfast I mounted a pony, and set off for Les Eaux-Chaudes and Gabas.

The facilities for riding in the Pyrenees are, excepting in a few localities in the eastern chain, very great. Ponies, generally speaking, small, but sure-footed, may be hired in almost every town and village for moderate charges.

Far be it from me to underrate the enjoyment of walking in mountain-land; but I hold that, while pedestrianism has many pleasures, these are not without alloy.

Travelling with friends you are almost sure to have some enthusiasts among your party, who are such gluttons in their appetites for walking that nothing short of two score miles a day will satisfy them. This allowance will probably be deemed excessive by the majority of the party: so a compromise is made, and

thirty miles a day decided on. But even this is too much. For who that has started at early morn in the Alps or Pyrenees, and trudged through a long day over lofty mountains, resolved with true British pluck to perform the allotted day's march, though at a terrible sacrifice of comfort, but remembers the battered and bruised condition of his feet as he plodded over the stones, seemingly harder and sharper as the miles lengthened? Arrived at your night's quarters, you cast yourself on the first seat at hand, and esteem yourself fortunate if you are not entirely disabled by blisters which some more tender-footed companion is ingeniously decorating with worsted threads drawn seton-fashion through them, or anoirting with brandy and tallow.

True, all this may be avoided by a judicious observance of the wholesome Italian proverb enjoining moderate exercise; but, somehow or other, I have never formed one of a walking party — and I have joined many — that we did not overtask our strength; the object apparently having always been to get over as much ground as possible between dawn and dusk.

Now although a long ride is not without some physical suffering, particularly in mountainous countries, where the pig-skin is uncomfortable, and your "leather" perhaps not particularly enduring, yet

I hold that this mode of locomotion, when it does not interfere with sight-seeing, is on the whole preferable to walking, and particularly when you have no companion. You possess the great advantage of being able to walk when you please, and when you arrive at the end of your day's journey, you positively enjoy a stroll while supper is preparing, whereas the foot-sore pedestrian is glad to be at rest.

The localities are but few where a mule or pony is unable to scramble, for the probability is that you do not want to climb Mont Blancs, Maladettas, or Canigous every day.

The lights of experience are valuable guides, and if I were going to undertake another Pyrenean tour, I would provide myself with a saddle, and a pair of small waterproof saddle bags to hold a kit. The saddles in the Pyrenees are, generally speaking, extremely uncomfortable; those on which it was my fate to ride in the eastern range were terribly thigh-torturing, being, in fact, little better than pack-saddles. A stout pair of strap spurs will shorten many a mile of tedious ground, and be found very serviceable, especially in your wanderings through the Eastern Pyrenees.

Take care, let me add, in concluding this riding

digression, to be strongly shod, for you will come to grief if your boots be like those of the dandy who abhorred walking.

And now for Les Eaux-Chaudes. This is a most interesting excursion, and, if favoured by fine weather, you will remember it with great pleasure. But here, perhaps more than in any other district of the Pyrenees, meteorological influences are frequently very adverse to the tourist, for the Val d'Ossau is extremely damp, and the impending mountains are the first lofty summits that meet the warm west wind, which condense the moisture; consequently their peaks are frequently shrouded. The bridle road, on leaving Les Eaux-Bonnes, is carried along the side of the Mont Goursie, frequently at a height of 500 feet above the Gave d'Oléron, which writhes and foams in its course down the defile. Pines and beeches, with a wilderness of underwood and flowers, are around and beneath you, while through the woods you catch ever changing views of the precipitous buttresses of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau and the adjoining pinnacles. The scene increases in sublimity and wildness when, just as you imagine that you have passed all civilisation, a modern and very prim-looking building, surrounded by arcades, appears before you. This is the thermal establishment of

Les Eaux-Chaudes, erected at the expense of government. The springs vary in temperature from 80° to 94°, and rise at the junction of the limestone and granite; the latter a beautiful rock with greenish felspar.

Les Eaux-Chaudes, though more remote and of less importance than Les Eaux-Bonnes, have long been celebrated. Henri IV. visited them with his mistress, Mademoiselle De la Fosseuse. The gallant monarch was anxious to show his fair friend the exciting sport of bear hunting; but could not persuade the lady to face the animals; and no wonder, for the hunting chronicles relate that the bears in the Val d'Ossau were large and strong — so strong and fierce that one is stated to have hugged several horses to death, while another fondly embraced seven arquebusaders until they fell to rise no more.

About half a mile from Les Eaux-Chaudes the Gave is crossed by Le Pont d'Enfer, an undeserved name, as there is nothing infernal about the structure. It leads, however, to wonderful scenery; a short way beyond, the Pic du Midi d'Ossau appears, with its twin summits—a magnificent object, towering over a crowd of mountains. Cascades stream down the precipices, and on passing the hamlet of Goust you plunge into a dark pine forest, which continues to

Gabas. This is the last village in France, scarcely meriting that name, as it consists of but half a dozen houses, whose inhabitants live by the traffic carried on between France and Spain. Nearly 20,000 mules pass the frontier annually, and you are made aware that Spain is not distant by being served with Malaga wine at the little cabaret. Here I dined — my desire for something substantial being met by about half an izzard, curiously cooked, served on a capacious trencher, that would have held the entire beast.

Leaving my pony in his stable, I set off on foot to the Plateau of Bioux Artiques, which I gained in about an hour. From hence the Pic du Midi d'Ossau is seen in all its majesty, and forms one of the finest prospects in the Pyrenees.

More striking, if possible, was my ride back to Les Eaux-Bonnes, for half the distance was accomplished when the sun was very low, broad shadows darkening the valley, increasing in intensity as I drew homewards.

CHAP. VIII.

To Cauterets.—Lestelle.—Valley of Lourdes. — Miraculous Image. —St. Bétheran.—A Confirmation.—Goîtres. — Les Hautes Pyrénées.—St. Pé.—Castle of Lourdes.—Valley of Argelez. — Monastery of St. Savin.—Pierrefitte.—Pic du Midi de Viscos.—Romantic Defile. — Cauterets. — The Springs. — Motley Company. — Invalids.—La Raillère.—Temperature of the Water. — Source des Œufs.—The Cæsar Spring.—Bear Baiting.—Lady Equestrians.— The Val Latour.—Pyrenean Dogs. — Sketching Subjects. — Cascades.—Pine Forests.—Pont d'Espagne. — Waterfalls. — Lac de Gaube.—The Vignemale.—The Lake Trout.

CAUTERETS may be reached in one long day by a mountain path from Les Eaux-Bonnes; but by this route you lose the lovely scenery of the Val d'Argelez; so, unless time pressed, you will do well to retrace your steps to Louvie, hire a car there, and proceed to Lestelle, twelve miles.

The drive between these places lies partly across a plain covered with maize; the road is frequently bordered by vines, hanging in festoons from apple and cherry-trees, but the houses, elsewhere picturesque, are not very lively to the traveller's eye, as their fronts are invariably turned away from the road.

Lestelle is charmingly situated at the entrance of the valley of Lourdes, and is approached by a bold single arch bridge spanning the Gave de Pau, here a soft blue stream. The crown of the bridge is mantled with ivy, which hangs in long pendants below the arch, and the entire structure, with its background of wooded hills, is highly picturesque. I was sitting down to transfer it to my sketch-book, when I was assailed by a number of women offering rosaries, medals, and images of a virgin reputed holy and miraculous, whose original is preserved in the neighbouring church of Bétheran. No sketching to be done in the presence of these harpies, for they would not stand aside, and in vain did I assure them that they were not transparent; so, closing my sketching apparatus, I went to see the church, passing between a row of stalls loaded with votive offerings. A glance was sufficient to make me aware that a Frenchman had artistic taste, if not religion, when he declared, after having seen the beautiful country and the ugly church that "le bon Dieu est mal logé à Lestelle." However, though the building failed to afford any pleasure, I was fortunate in arriving just in time to see a gaudily attired bishop confirming a numerous congregation of girls, whose kneeling forms draped with white veils contrasted picturesquely with a

group of dark-robed nuns and red capoted peasants.

When the ceremony was over, egress from the church was rendered difficult by a crowd of beggars clamouring for charity. Among them I was pained to see withered old crones terribly afflicted by *goître*. Strange that this hideous complaint should be so frequently found in lovely valleys. In the Pyrenees, as in Switzerland, where nature wears her fairest robes, the people are the greatest martyrs to *goître* and *crétinism*.

Shortly after leaving Lestelle, we enter the Department of Les Hautes Pyrénées, and are again in mountain land. St. Pé, whose inhabitants carry on a brisk business as nail- and box comb-makers, is a frontier town of the old state of Bigorre. The valley now contracts, the hills are higher, and we see on a precipitous rock the old castle of Lourdes. Around this war raged long and fiercely. The Saracens, driven from the plains of Poitiers, took shelter beneath its walls from the victorious sword of Charles Martel; and our own history records how long and bravely English soldiers struggled to hold this our last possession in the south of France.

Beyond Lourdes the scenery becomes barren and monotonous, which, however unpleasing, has the

effect of heightening by contrast the exquisite beauty of the Valley of Argelez, declared to be, and justly, the Paradise of the Pyrenees; and if a combination of swelling hills, crowned by forest-clad mountains, clear flowing waters, deep green pastures, varied crops, orchards, picturesque villages, and a great number of churches and ruined castles can be said to constitute an earthly paradise, the Val d'Argelez has these in rare perfection. There was nothing indeed to mar the scene but the hideous *goitred crétin* peasants, who, with their idiotic gaze, sought our charity as we drove through the valley.

I turned aside near Argelez to visit the old monastery of St. Savin, standing on a lofty hill to the right of the town. A zigzag path through a forest of chestnut-trees leads to the building, which is old enough in appearance and tradition to satisfy the most exacting antiquary. It stands on the site of a Roman fort, which became the dwelling of a small fraternity of Cenobites. Subsequently Charlemagne founded the present ruined monastery. The architecture of the church is Romanesque, and presents many interesting features. But apart from the monastery, you should not omit climbing this hill summit, from whence you have a grand view of the glories of the Val d'Argelez.

At Pierrefitte, the road bifurcates; that to the right leads to Cauterets, and the left to Luz. The Pic du Midi de Viscos, a bold mountain, rising 7030 feet above the sea, divides the two gorges through which the roads are carried. The entire distance from Pierrefitte to Cauterets—five miles—presents a succession of wild mountain scenery, which, thanks to the road-engineer, you are enabled to see to great advantage as you journey along—that is, if you are not entombed in the intérieur or rotonde of a diligence. Beneath beetling buttresses glowing with lichens — over the foaming Gave—now surmounting seemingly impassable rocks, and then plunging deep into the gorge—your wonder increases as you proceed, until a turn in the defile discloses Cauterets.

It is a peculiar feature of nearly all the Pyrenean brunnens to be buried in ravines. Cauterets is overhung by mountains which almost meet, leaving only a small triangular shaped piece of ground on which the houses are built.

On descending from the diligence I was surrounded by a swarm of touters, here, however, less violent than usual, from the circumstance that they were women; but what was wanting in physical force was more than compensated by volubility, all proclaiming, in cataracts of gutturals, the excellence of the hotels

they represented. Again making choice of the Hôtel de France—this name is very common in the Pyrenees—I was marched off from the contending parties in great triumph by a coquettish girl, who seemed proud of her victory. My business with the landlord came to a very satisfactory conclusion, four francs a day making me possessor of a room from which I commanded a multitude of peaks, those immediately around Cauterets pine-clad to the summit, surmounted by a snow-mantled pinnacle reflecting the golden radiance of the setting sun.

The temptation was great to go forth and ramble, but the stern requirements of hunger dictated the policy of making immediate acquaintance with the contents of mine host's larder, which turned out to be well stored. Indeed, the tourist is singularly fortunate in the Pyrenees as regards meals, for at all hours, early and late, he will be able to get something to eat, which is not always the case in Switzerland. Delicious trout and various dishes of meat were set before me, followed by a great heap of mountain strawberries. Just as I had finished my repast, music in an adjoining salon announced the usual evening réunion. Looking in, I saw a motley company; but being very tired, and remembering that sleep at the Pyrenean brunnens is out of the question after the

sun rises, I retired to my room, and was soon in the land of dreams.

As I expected, the healing waters of Cauterets are sought early by the visitors. At four the little town was astir, and at five everybody was up. Turning out with the rest, I encountered a crowd of pilgrims *en route* to the springs. The sight was very remarkable. Ladies, some walking, others riding ponies, or in chaises *à porteur*, swathed in blankets: men in wonderful costume; Spaniards muffled to the eyes, and wrapped in capacious brown cloth cloaks—Cauterets is 3096 feet above the sea, and chilly in the early morning—officers in uniform, abbés, monks, nuns, and peasant-women in their red capulets, twirling their distaff as they walked under heavy burdens, all bound for the springs.

Unmistakable chronic invalids, struggling in the quicksands of mortality—some, pale and wan, submitting meekly to their impending fate; others, manifesting by their showy dress and jaunty air their unwillingness to resign the vanities of life, reminding one of Lord Chatham and his coronetted crutches—while a great proportion showed no outward signs of indisposition.

Twelve distinct hot springs rise in the valley or defile of Cauterets, which is transverse to the Pyrenean

chain. The principal and most abundant is that called La Raillère, about a mile above the town. The junction of the granite and slate is very conspicuous near this spring. The temperature of the water in the basin where it rises is 101°·9. The Source des Œufs, the hottest spring in this part of the Pyrenees, attains a temperature of 130°; but from its position in the bed of the Gave it is not used. The waters of La Raillère are enclosed in a large house situated on the dreary slope of a bare granite mountain; but, though the hygeian goddess is not enshrined amidst lovely scenery, her temple is visited by the great majority of the water drinkers.

I had the curiosity to taste the water. Invalids must have great faith in its curative powers, for it is extremely nauseous, pregnant with sulphur and an undefinable compound of rotten eggs. Ask an inhabitant of Cauterets, and you will be told that the healing power of this repulsive draught is unlimited. He will also show you the Cæsar spring, so called from the tradition that the great Roman was cured by its waters; while another, called Le Roi, was used by Abarca, King of Aragon, from which circumstance Cauterets is much resorted to by Spaniards.

After breakfast, the Place and streets presented a bustling scene. Spaniards crying chocolate, real

Spanish, sold in thin sticks, and very good,—these gentry, by the way, have other commodities for sale, which have not been honoured by the inspection of custom-house officers;—peasants, whacking cracked drums, and shouting: "Combat des ours et des chiens!" to come off in the afternoon, small Pyrenean bears being pitted against mastiffs; itinerant pedlars, hawking their various wares; and troops of ponies, whose owners are keenly looking out for custom; nor vainly, for, numerous as these animals are at Cauterets, they are all in request. Ladies in gay riding dresses, jaunty hats with flaunting feathers, bright-coloured jackets set off with red sashes, skirts not so long as to prevent a pretty foot in an elegant chaussure being seen, the boot not unfrequently adorned with a spur, which, by the way, the French ladies are not sparing in the use of—and their cavaliers in costumes, if not as bright as those of the ladies, at least far from sober hued—form, as at Eaux-Bonnes, large riding parties, confining their excursions generally to the immediate neighbourhood of Cauterets. This custom is fortunate for the tourist, who prefers seeing the grand and lovely scenery of the Pyrenees without the companionship of boisterous troops of fashionable Parisians.

Hiring a pony, I devoted the day to a sketching

expedition up the Val Latour. A young dog of the true Pyrenean breed followed me, and evinced by his affectionate manner that he was quite willing to link his life to mine. On returning to Cauterets, I ascertained that he was for sale; the price demanded was only thirty francs, and I much regretted that my plans did not permit me to make him my travelling companion, as Pyrenean dogs generally are faithful animals. The vicinity of Cauterets abounds with subjects for the landscape painter, all glowing with delicious colours; but as the reader cannot linger with me among them, I will ask him to accompany me to the Lac de Gaube, one of the most interesting excursions in the Pyrenees. It is cradled among high mountains, and the path is rough and stony, but practicable for ponies, so unless you prefer tramping you may save your feet and ride all the way. Having already experienced the heat of the Pyrenean valleys at noon-tide, I left Cauterets early, and was past La Raillère before the water drinkers had left the spring. Beyond this the mountains close, and the path winds up the defile of the Marcadaou, among huge boulders, by the side of the foaming Gave. Now, thought I, as a buttress shut out the springs, I am alone with nature; but no, there are springs above that of La Raillère, all more

or less patronised. That of Le Bois is the highest, and here I came upon a group of Spaniards, wrapped in their mantas, fine stalwart fellows, with huge legs and feet cased in rough hempen sandals. They were drinking the water with much gravity, presenting a great contrast in this respect to the French, who gulp the nasty stuff amidst music and laughter.

Now, however, you bid farewell to the springs and their votaries, and the scenery changes. Fir-trees relieve the wrinkled face of the granite precipices; the Gave plunges down the gorge in a series of cascades; one, the Cerizet, is of great beauty; and the mountains on either side tower to a prodigious height, crowned by peaks. Higher still, you enter a pine forest, which clothes the summits of these lofty mountains, — every ledge is fringed with pines, and only where the rocks are actually vertical are they bare. I rode slowly through this forest, being arrested frequently by the exquisite views appearing between the pines. These, steeped frequently in the glowing prismatic hues of miniature rainbows formed by the waterfalls,—the underwood matted by lovely creepers, shading even lovelier flowers, the trees sturdier and more varied as the elevation increases, occasional glimpses seen through their branches of the peaks far above; such are the features of the

ride to the Pont d'Espagne, six miles from Cauterets.

This bridge, leading to the Marcadaou Pass into Spain, is a frail looking structure of rough pines, thrown across a deep gully, down which thunder the waters from the Lac de Gaube, and the snows and glaciers of the Marcadaou. The torrents, leaping together from the precipice, meet in mid-air, and plunge roaring and foaming down the gorge. Compared to the falls in Switzerland, those in the Pyrenees are diminutive, but the setting of the Pyrenean cataracts is, in my opinion, more picturesque. The rocks amidst which the water falls are invariably massive, and the vegetation displays a luxuriance unknown in more northern Helvetia. The Pont d'Espagne waterfall has moreover the grand features of magnificent mountain scenery, — pine forests on the one hand, on the other bare precipices, above which you will probably see eagles wheeling in great circles.

After having made a sketch of this picturesque fall, I mounted my pony, which was enjoying nature to its great satisfaction, cropping the tender herbage fringing the Gave, and pushed on for the lake. But before I had advanced one hundred yards, the noise of another waterfall broke upon my ear, and my pony, an excellent guide, by the way, stopped at a

small chalet, in a manner that implied, beyond all doubt, that he expected me to dismount again. Acting on the hint, I left him to forage while I followed a boy, who had started up from behind a rock, and proffered his services to conduct me to "la Cascade," the fall, par excellence. From a small grassy plateau you see the Gave, rushing out of the Lac de Gaube, descend in a bold unbroken leap down a lofty precipice; but though the fall is unquestionably fine, and would make the fortune of a landlord at our lakes if he could keep it under lock and key, and show it to admiring cockneys for a consideration, it does not possess the interest of the double fall of the Pont d'Espagne, which has the advantage of a far greater abundance of water.

The path from this point to the Lac de Gaube, about three miles, is wretched, being carried over fallen trees and great roots,—among huge rocks, and frequently through swampy ground. At length, after a long climb, I emerged on a plateau, and saw a tiny sheet of turquoise-hued water —

> "A lofty precipice in front,
> A silent tarn below."

The Lac de Gaube, though only two miles and a half in circumference, is yet the largest lake in the Pyrenees. What it lacks in extent is, however, in some

measure compensated for by depth, for the sounding line shows that it is 425 feet deep in the centre. The mountains around the lake are bare, except where seamed by lines of straggling pines torn by the avalanches which plunge down in the spring. The centre of the picture is entirely filled by the noble Vignemale, 11,000 feet high, robed with snow and streaked by glaciers;—mists were curling up, and wreathing the head of this grand mountain while I gazed upon it, now settling like a pall on its crest, and now rent by blasts disclosing the snowy heights and blue glaciers. The sublimity of the scene is greatly heightened by the absence of all cultivation. Long before the Lac de Gaube is reached, you exchange the glowing warmth of Cauterets for a chilly temperature, and at the elevation of the lake, nearly 6000 feet above the sea, vegetation is confined to stunted pines and mountain flora. But although the ground is barren for the wants of man, the cold waters of the little lake yield delicious trout, *bien saumonée*, which you may taste in a small hut near the lake, occupied by a fisherman and his wife. Be prepared to pay high for the dainty repast; but you will not probably grudge a little extravagance, for the ride and sharp mountain air are great provocatives of hunger.

The trout of the Lac de Gaube are wise,—declining to rise at a fly. Ephemeræ are scarce in this highland region, but we know that trout, and particularly salmon trout, will rise at artificial flies, though they have never seen natural insects on the water. One is puzzled to account for the existence of these fish in such elevated mountain lakes. Trout are, however, found at a still greater height than this lake. The *salmo trutta* exists in considerable numbers in the Silsersee, a lake in the Grisons, four miles long, and at an elevation of 6130 feet above the sea. Who that has heard of the Lac de Gaube does not remember the sad story associated with its deep waters? how a young bride and her husband, within three short months of their marriage day, perished in the lake. No eyes saw them pass from life to death, and yet a detestable and most improbable tale has been manufactured, and is sold in the form of a pamphlet, by the fisherman, who perhaps finds the fabrication as profitable as the trout.

I lingered long on the shores of this lovely mountain mere, which gleamed like steel when the sun sank behind the mountains. The return ride through the forest, when the slanting sunbeams darted athwart the serried pines, making isles of golden light on the moss and flower-covered ground, was

most enjoyable, and when the fading sunlight could no longer pierce the dense forest, solemn and impressive thoughts arose, which were only put to flight by the lights of Cauterets.

CHAP. IX.

Cauterets as a Residence.— Bath Charges. — To Luz.— An ancient Postillion.—Old Coryat.— Gorge of Luz.—Pont d'Enfer.—Hôtel des Pyrénées.—Luz. — The Three Valleys. — Pig Washing.— Curious Population Registers.—Peculiar Costume.—The Loup-Garou. — Strange Superstitions. — A Race of Giants.—Charter of Bigorre. — St. Marie. — Templar Church. —The Cagot's Door.

I LIKE Cauterets,— at least to me it was a pleasant place, notwithstanding the crowd of water-drinkers, *malades imaginaires,* and others, heaven help them! truly and miserably ill. How the mind colours scenery, causing the face of nature, when cares are unknown, to glow with glorious colours, and on the other hand, when we are oppressed and the world seems out of joint, how dull and uninteresting appears even the loveliest country. Then the weather during my residence at Cauterets was extremely fine;— you may confidently expect favourable weather in the Pyrenees during August and September, and my room, in a small house adjoining the hotel, commanded a garden radiant with flowers, beyond which flowed a clear and sparkling stream.

There were but two little *désagréments* to mar my comfort. The one, that with all my entreaties, coaxing, and promises of a liberal *bonne main*, I could not prevail on the sturdy *fille de chambre* to give me sufficient water for washing. Tubs were not scarce, and as for water, it ran almost past the door. I dare say, however, that the *fille* thought my request for a large vessel and plenty of water very unreasonable, seeing that everybody else was satisfied by the ablution of baths; but although these are cheap and abundant at Cauterets*, they did not supply the Englishman's morning want of his tub and plenty of cold water. I thought of the Gave, and of the possibility of bathing in its clear cold waters, unseen by the visitors; but they were so early out, that unless I had bathed at midnight hours, it would have been impossible to have avoided exposure; and my readers probably know the penalties incurred in France by bathing within eye-shot of any one without wearing the prescribed bathing dress. *Désagrément* the second was the rather too close proximity of my room to the *cuisine*, where roasting and frying were

* Here are the charges: — bains, 1 franc; douches, 1 fr.; linge, 20 centimes; boisson, gratuite. It would be cruel to charge for such nasty stuff. As the baths are in great request, the regulations require that you shall not remain longer in the bath room than an hour, including undressing and dressing.

constantly going on. One morning I had the curiosity to visit the place, with permission from the *chef*,—never venture into a French *cuisine* without this great man's leave, — and I counted twenty-six stew-pans in full blast. The guests could not have been very ill, you will say, or at least had no ailments interfering with good appetites. How many animals were slaughtered daily to feed us I cannot say, but this I know, that every morn I heard convulsive cacklings, proclaiming the last moments of luckless fowls.

I travelled to Luz in the company of five Parisians, who, never having seen mountains before, were in raptures with the Pyrenees. We hired a superannuated vehicle which had done such hard duty on rough roads as to be apparently unfit for further locomotion, but the landlord, who had ordered the crazy carriage to have an additional swathing of stout rope, declared that it would hold out to Luz. Our driver was as antiquated as the carriage, and a character now nearly extinct in France. Brought up as a postillion, he had bumped in the saddle on the road near Bordeaux as long as posting was in vogue, and when railways put an end to that mode of travelling, he got out of his jack boots never to put foot in them more, and entered the service of M. Ussac, of the

Hôtel de France, as a driver. The fellow, though he may have forgotten his art of riding, had not those of whip-cracking and swearing, which used to be constantly practised by genuine old French postillions, oaths alternating with pistol-like reports from their whips. Quaint old Coryat, as far back as 1608, complains in his "Crudities" of these gentry. "The French guides, otherwise called the postillions, have one most diabolical custom in their travels upon the way. Diabolical it may well be called, for whensoever their horses do a little anger them, they will say in their fury, '*Allons, diable,*' and other great and wicked oaths. Also, if they happen to be angry with a stranger, they will say to him, '*Le diable t'emporte.*' This I know by mine own experience."

Our ex-postillion driver swore awfully, so much so that, for the sake of two ladies who were with us, he was more than once called to order; but when oaths were few the whip was wielded with greater vigour, so we came to the conclusion that it was better for us to bear the swearing than to allow the horses to be unmercifully scourged, and the beasts were evidently so accustomed to be driven under a storm of *sacrés* and *diables* that the driver's tongue was far more effective than his whip.

The road from Luz to Cauterets requires you to

return to Pierrefitte. There is a path across the slopes of the mountains dividing these plains, but the scenery on this route is much inferior to that of the two defiles leading to Cauterets and Luz. On reaching Pierrefitte the road turns to the right, and you immediately enter the grand gorge, through which the Gave de Pau descends from the mountains above Gavarnie. This defile is, if possible, finer than that between Pierrefitte and Cauterets. The mountain walls are closer and higher, frequently appearing to overlap each other; the woods are darker, and the torrent, which you cross over single arch bridges no less than seven times, makes perpetual music chafing over its rocky bed. The present road is carried along a succession of shelves overhanging the Gave at a great height; very much lower, however, than the old road, the dizzy elevation of which may be seen by the remains of the Pont d'Enfer, which hangs 300 feet above the present structure. On our way up the gorge we met large flocks of goats, and droves of gaily-caparisoned mules, which had left Spain but two days before. Picturesque animals are these goats and mules, they are in such excellent keeping with the scenery; and all along the border land between France and Spain you meet them, often in places where you wonder how they find foothold.

A short distance from Luz the mountain walls recede, agriculture reappears, and in the midst of a small triangular plain stands the small town. It would be difficult to find a lovelier or a more apparently desirable spot for a residence, and yet frequent floods during winter compel the inhabitants to remove to higher habitations, consisting of mere huts erected to meet immediate requirements.

I put up at l'Hôtel des Pyrénées, kept by Madame Cazeaux, whose *cuisine* is justly famous. Indeed, if her apartments were as good as her dinners the Hôtel des Pyrénées would take high rank among French hotels; but there is great room for improvement in the accommodation department. Never, excepting in Spain, did I see and feel so many fleas as tormented me in this house, and I realised the truth of the Frenchman's remark, applied to these nimble insects in another hotel, that they actually walk in your boots.

Pleasant rambles lie around Luz. Three valleys invite you to wander. One leading to Pierrefitte, another in which St. Sauveur is situated, and the third opening to Gavarnie. The last two are watered by rivers which meet at Luz, and flow down the Pierrefitte gorge. Advantage is taken by the peasants of this wealth of water to irrigate their fields. Little

brooks and rivulets in a perfect tangle intersect the plain, and impart an exquisitely vivid green to the grass.

Another use to which these crystal streams are put is that of washing pigs. A branch of the Gave passes immediately under the windows of the Hôtel des Pyrénées, and all day long pigs are driven into the stream to undergo ablution. I envied them, for the weather was very hot, and while I could not obtain a vessel of greater capacity than a pie-dish for washing, they were standing up to their bellies in the cool brook, while the swineherd casts water on their pink backs and sides from large wooden ladles. Their faces, countenances rather, were expressive of contentment, and so perfectly were they at their ease that the very muscles of their tails relaxed, and the usual spiral terminations hung lankily in the water. For full half an hour is each pig laved, and he leaves the water a handsome clean animal, worthy of the honour awaiting him of becoming succulent bacon and delicious Bayonne hams; and lest my praise of the Luz pigs should be deemed too *couleur de rose*, hear what a French traveller says of them. "Je promets aux voyageurs qu'ils prendront plaisir à regarder les cochons de Luz. Car ils ne sont pas couverts de fange infecte, comme dans nos fermes;

ils sont roses et noirs, bien lavés, et vivent sur les grèves sèches auprès des eaux courantes. Il n'y a dans toute leur vie qu'un moment fâcheux, celui où on les saigne."

Luz was formerly the chief town of the district, comprehending the adjacent mountains and the three valleys from which they rise. The district formed a small republic. Laws were enacted, and the registers of the population were kept by tallies called *totchoux*, meaning cut-sticks. This custom being unknown to an official, who was sent from Paris to Luz at the close of the last century on the part of the Government, he desired that the registers of the commune might be brought to him, and was not a little surprised to hear that a man was waiting outside his house with the registers in question in the form of two waggon loads of *totchoux*. Primitive simplicity! and although many governments have ruled Luz since the tally days, the people of her valleys continue rude and simple. Here are no loungers, no pale-faced invalids; but rough hardy peasants who live by agricultural labour, hunting, and trading between France and Spain. Their dress is peculiar, consisting during the winter and when they ascend the lofty mountains of a very thick and coarse undyed brown cloth hood attached to the

cloak. It is locally termed a *cordeillat*, and when thrown over the head, causes the wearer to look somewhat like a bear standing on its hind legs. The women invariably wear a scarlet cloth capulet, for which they give from ten to twenty-five francs, according to the quality of the cloth and the brilliancy of the dye.

The primitiveness of these peasants has not yet been rubbed off by contact with tourists, and they hold to many curious superstitions. They are firm believers in the Loup-Garou, a species of malevolent fiend corresponding to the Banshee of Ireland; but their great fear is of a strange wicked demon called Yona Gorri, who though generally seen of a fiery red colour, has the power of appearing to the terrified peasants in a variety of hues. This demon, they affirm, lives in a cavern near the summit of Anie, a lofty mountain near Luz. He is particularly angry if disturbed by any enterprising stranger, and vents his rage by desolating the country by terrific thunderstorms.

This belief is entertained in other parts of the Pyrenees, where, during violent hail storms, *l'Homme Noir* is supposed to be hurling the ice shower from the mountain tops.

And what a picture is presented of the great un-

certainty attending agriculture in the mountainous regions of the Pyrenees, where the peasant has a life-long struggle with adverse meteorological influences, when we find gaunt famine consequent on the total failure of crops taking the form in his diseased imagination of a spectre. This being, believed to haunt the mountain slopes around Luz, is called "Douminico;" he is said to attend the death-bed of those who die of diseases induced by a want of the necessaries of life; a huge bell hung within the supposed hollow dome of the mighty Pic de Campan, tolling while the spirits of the unfortunate victims are taking flight.

Another popular superstition is, that the neighbouring small hamlet of Visos was formerly inhabited by a race of giants called Esprasous, whose average height was eight feet. The belief is in some measure sustained by the circumstance that gigantic human bones are occasionally exhumed in the vicinity of Visos, and the Luz registers, not in this instance tallies, record that the last of these giants died a few years ago, at the patriarchal age of 110 years, and that, although bent by extreme senility, he still stood nearly seven feet high.

A highly characteristic feature of the population of this part of the Pyrenees is their love of liberty. Not that they make any political demonstrations, but if

you talk to them on this subject, you will find them eloquently espousing the cause of freedom. But indeed, the peasants in the Val Bastan have a prescriptive right to be free. The charter of Bigorre, one of the oldest mentioned in French chronicles, was granted in 1090 by Count Bernard, a petty prince, who, while taking care of himself as lord of his people, accorded them various privileges; one of which decreed that no peasant holding land should be obliged to go to the wars or become a soldier, unless for the purpose of defending his own property.

The Count, though living in rough days, seems to have been a great respecter of ladies. He made several laws in their favour, and ordered that the person of any monk or priest should be held sacred, provided the holy man obtained refuge in a woman's house with her consent.

I spent the evening rambling in the vicinity of the old town. There is a charming view from the hill of Saint-Pierre, behind Luz, from whence the portals of the three valleys can be seen. The precipitous heights of Sainte-Marie, crowned by the ruins of an old castle, are also worth climbing on account of the fine prospect which they command, and the picturesque features of the lichen-clad fragments of the castle. This, you are told, was constructed by the English to

defend this part of Bigorre, which belonged to the Black Prince, one of the last strongholds retained by the gallant Edward of all his Pyrenean possessions.

But by far the most interesting antiquity at Luz is the old Templar Church, built by those sturdy priest-soldiers, the Knights Templars, at a period when praying and fighting were closely allied. The building consists of a large vaulted church, surrounded by battlemented walls, bearing a tower, constructed in the most approved manner for offensive and defensive operations. Thus, while the exterior was highly calculated to act as a formidable defence against the Saracens, the interior was equally calculated to inspire sentiments of piety and devotion. The vaulted roof yet bears traces of the emblem of the Knights Templars, and the entire structure is in a very remarkable state of preservation; and would be almost perfect as a hoary relic of past ages, if it were not disfigured by vile ornaments. For some people, conceiving, we must presume, that prayer and holy thoughts are incompatible without the incentives of tawdry decorations, and measuring the minds of their neighbours by their own narrow perceptions, have bedizened and tricked out the old venerable church, —suspending rosy cherubim from the roof, perching plethoric angels on cornices, and, in short, blotting

out antiquity to such a degree, that I am confident if an ancient Knight Templar could revisit the place he would scarcely know it again.

Such alterations may astonish and dazzle the eyes of a simple peasant, accustomed to the rude furniture of his mountain home, but we may doubt whether his prayers are more sincere than they were when he knelt before the high altar, and only saw the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The narrow doorway through which the Cagots were made to enter the church is very distinct; for, though blocked up, you can still see it, four feet in height, and two feet six inches wide, surmounted by a ponderous stone lintel.

CHAP. X.

St. Sauveur.—Val Bastan.—Geology of St. Sauveur.—The Thermal Springs. — Fashionable Invalids. — Valley of Luz. — Picturesque Flocks.—Ascent of the Pic de Bergons.—Extensive Panorama.—A Herdsman's Life. — Rude Agriculture. — Bears. — Lynxes. — Criminal Statistics of the Pyrenees.

ALTHOUGH there were no water-drinkers to disturb me at Luz, yet, for certain entomological reasons, I left my bed at a very early hour, and strolled to St. Sauveur before breakfast. The situation of this place is very remarkable: the little town of one street standing upon a shelf of slaty limestone, overhanging the blue Gave, and commanding views of the valley of Barèges or Lavedan, the entrance of the Val Bastan, and the Pas des Échelles, leading to Gavarnie. The water, issuing, as at Les Eaux-Chaudes, at the junction of the limestone and granite, is sulphurous. The temperature of La Hontalade, the hottest of the four springs, is 90°·2; while cold springs exist at no great distance, varying in temperature from 49° to 53°.

The geology of St. Sauveur is extremely interesting. The veins or beds of felspar, which may be

seen a short distance above the town, extend to the neighbouring great mountain masses; and Professor James Forbes, who has examined this district, believes that the St. Sauveur springs, as well as those of Barèges, owe their origin to circumstances connected with the presence of metamorphic rocks,—that these rocks are intimately connected with the granite in the vicinity, and that distinct convulsions have accompanied or succeeded their elevation.*

The granite at St. Sauveur is further interesting, as it contains veins of exceedingly hard porphyry, having a quartz base, in which crystals of garnets are imbedded.

The St. Sauveur waters are in great repute for certain nervous complaints to which women are liable; and their speciality is evident by the great number of lady visitors. During my ramble in the town I met an overwhelming preponderance of the fair sex—few, however, having the appearance of invalids. If they were, they cloaked their ailments beneath fashionable garments; and as for complexion, what will not cosmetics do? "Ai-je assez d'argent pour être malade?" is a question which Parisians are said to put to themselves when contem-

* On the Temperatures and Geological Relations of certain Hot Springs. By J. D. Forbes.

plating a trip to the Pyrenean brunnens; and the visitors who promenade in the *jardin anglais* at St. Sauveur, or ride in laced habits in the neighbourhood, have evidently money enough to play the part of *le malade imaginaire* in magnificent style.

I will not, however, affirm that there were no invalids among the gay groups whom I saw here drinking glass after glass of the water. Probably the doctor was right, who, while he ordered the ladies at St. Sauveur to drink the water abundantly, prescribed at the same time *beaucoup de distraction*, in which, I have no doubt, his patients cordially agree.

The springs are said to have been discovered by a Bishop of Tarbes, who set up this inscription over the principal spring:

"Vos haurietis aquas de fontibus Salvationis,"

whence the name. But the bishop's Latin does not seem to have made the springs much known, for they fell by degrees into disuse, and were almost unknown, when the Abbé Bézégua of Pau visited them seventy years ago, and brought them into favour; still further increased by their having been of great benefit to the Duchesse d'Angoulême. The site is charming: delightful shady walks through thick woods serpentine along the precipitous slopes, and

you may descend by them to a romantic bridge which spans the Gave, from whence glorious views are obtained of some of the highest Pyrenean summits. A bridle path extends from this bridge to Luz, and I was not aware, until I had rambled along it, how truly lovely is the sweet valley of Luz. There is nothing except the Val d'Argelez comparable to it in the Pyrenees, for the scenery is a rare combination of beautiful fertility, magnificence, and sublimity.

Near Luz I fell in with large flocks of sheep, which had been driven down the mountains to be shorn. Each flock was headed by its shepherd, who was closely followed by a grand-looking ram, bearing a deep and far-sounding bell attached to his neck. After him trotted the sheep, and to them succeeded half a dozen goats, which supply the shepherd with milk, and from two to six Pyrenean dogs, which cleverly kept the sheep together, a herd boy bringing up the rear.

Madame Cazeaux seems to be well aware of the appetising nature of the Luz air and walks. I found on my return to her hotel a *déjeuner à la fourchette* that would have done credit to a first-class Paris *réstaurant*. You might indeed have called it a *déjeuner d'érudition*, so much pains were taken to place a great number of varied and excellent dishes on the

table. Having rendered justice to the fare, and fortified myself for any undertaking, I debated what I should do, and had almost decided on ascending the Pic du Midi, when certain meteorological signs led me to believe that though the morning was very propitious for mountain excursions, the weather would probably change in the afternoon. So I dwarfed my ambition to ascending the Pic de Bergons; which, although attaining the respectable elevation of 6916 feet above the sea, is but a pigmy among the giant summits which form the crest between France and Spain.

If you ask a Frenchman who has visited the Pyrenees, whether he has ascended any of the mountains, he will probably tell you that he climbed the Pic de Bergons and no other. Our continental neighbours, though possessing considerable energy, do not expend it on mountain climbing, rarely caring to ascend a height unless on horseback, or in a *chaise à porteur;* for though this latter mode of locomotion is more especially designed for tender-limbed ladies, I have seen men availing themselves of it, who appeared to be quite as fit to carry their bearers as to be carried by them.

The Pic de Bergons is to the Pyrenees what the Rigi Kulm is to Switzerland, with this happy difference in favour of the French mountain, that as yet

there is no hotel on the summit, and it is possible to spend an hour there alone. Adhering to my determination of riding when practicable, I hired an excellent little pony for three francs, and accompanied by a boy who was determined to officiate as my guide, though the path is sufficiently defined to render one quite unnecessary, I set off.

The lower slopes of the Pic are cultivated; for in this southern clime, elevations which in more northern latitudes would be clothed with heath yield crops of golden corn. Above this cultivated zone the path winds among a great variety of trees, and above them it zigzags up the cone of the peak. Herdsmen's huts at this elevation dot the mountain sides, fragile structures, which look as if a storm-blast would uproot and send them reeling down the steep. The climb near the summit is rather tough, but my pony made light work of it, and in about three hours from the time that I left Luz, he was cropping the herbage on the top of the Pic.

Not a cloud obscured the panoramic view, which embraces a multitude of mountain masses. The Brèche de Roland is seen distinctly, appearing like a tiny notch in a mighty wall. To the left rise the snowy summits of the Marboré, Tromouse, and Mont Perdu; on the right, the Vignemale, streaked with

glaciers, and to the north-east, the grand rugged Pic du Midi de Bigorre. These are the giants towering over a host of cones and pinnacles, furrowed and riven by winter storms, and the picture is filled up by dark dells, purple glens, green valleys, and gleaming streams, winding through pastures, corn-fields, and woods, which, at this elevation, seem like a rich mosaic.

The flora of the Bergons is extremely rich and beautiful. The lovely gentian, the rhododendron, the alpine rose, and other plants, gem the sides and summit of the Pic, and numerous insects, including the gorgeous butterfly (Apollo Papilio) flutter over the bright wild flowers.

The scene was one of rare beauty, and I was well pleased to have the mountain top to myself for half an hour. On such heights the more we can shut out man the better; not the sympathising friend, but—

"The crowd, the hum, the shock of men"

which jar terribly with the sublimity of mountain summits. And never was I more impressed with the fact, than by having all my fancies and day dreams rudely put to flight by the arrival of a large party of French ladies and gentlemen, who were utterly unable to enjoy the prospect in silence. Leaving them in the fulness of their noisy joy, I went in search of my

pony, which I had left in charge of the boy guide. Fortunately the animal had evinced no inclination to wander far, for the boy was fast asleep. What to him were the surrounding mountains, and all their glory and beauties? Haunts for the izzard; for he was the son of a hunter, and mountains were fine in his estimation only according to the number of izzards which frequented their snowy heights, or the bears to be found in their forests.

On my way down the Bergons, I turned aside and halted before the door of a hut. The herdsman and his wife were at home; he had just driven a lame heifer into the hut, and, in answer to my request for a little refreshment, the wife placed a hunch of rye bread and a bowl of goat's milk on a rude table, handing at the same time a three-legged stool for me to sit on.

The hut consisted of two rooms, one occupied by the herdsman and his family, the other by the cattle, during the winter; so that the words of Scripture, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," must be realised when bipeds and quadrupeds lie down in the close proximity rendered necessary by the narrow dimensions of the cabin, and the slight partition between man and beast.

The furniture was of the rudest nature; two dirty

bags on the floor, stuffed with maize leaves, served as beds for parents and children; beside these stood two chests and a rickety cupboard, and the large chimney-piece was garnished with wooden bowls and spoons.

As the man could talk a little civilised French, I was glad of the opportunity of conversing with him; so, while munching the hard though good bread, I obtained some information which the reader may be interested to hear.

Though a herdsman, he was also a small landed proprietor, possessing, as well as I could make out, about three acres of ground in the valley of Bastan, on which he raised rye, barley, potatoes, and maize. This land, ten cows, and eight goats constituted his agricultural property. Besides his wife, he had three lusty boys to support, and though they were often on the verge of hunger, yet somehow or other they all managed to exist. They lived on the produce of their land, and bought their clothes with the money derived from the sale of their milk at St. Sauveur. Meat they scarcely ever touched, unless on extraordinary occasions, when a kid was sacrificed to do honour to a religious fête or a family rejoicing. Their great enemy was the winter floods, which, sweeping through the valleys, frequently rendered their fields incapable of being tilled, by covering them with

stones, brought down by the swollen torrents from the mountains. Did it not occur to the authorities of the Commune, I asked, to erect some kind of breakwater or dam to control these floods, the expense of which might be defrayed by a slight tax on the proprietors of the land? No; nothing was done to avert the calamity. And thus, for want of a little capital judiciously expended, severe suffering is the annual lot of many of the peasants.

At the same time my informant admitted that the land, notwithstanding these adverse influences, was gradually becoming more profitable. Agriculture seemed better understood, and districts which formerly were wild and uncultivated, were now reclaimed and bore crops. As a proof of this he remembered when a boy, having frequently seen bears in the valleys; whereas now they are rarely met with, except on the high mountain ranges. The bouquetin, now almost extinct, was common, and his father had seen lynxes in the neighbouring forests.*

* Ramond states that these animals were not uncommon in the mountains near Gavarnie. Writing in 1801, he says: — "Ces lieux sont la retraite du bouquetin, de l'ours et du lynx. Il était ordinaire, il y a quarante ans, de les voir descendre jusque dans la plaine." Lynxes were very numerous formerly in Switzerland. Thirty or forty years ago, seven or eight were killed annually in the Grisons alone.

There are few things more striking than the patient endurance of the peasant, who fights a life-long battle with nature for subsistence, and seldom if ever repining, journeys through the world, believing and trusting in God. Here was a rude mountaineer, who was not ignorant that his lot was very hard compared with that of many others, for he made frequent journeys to St. Sauveur to sell his milk, and there he saw how his brother men lived; but he was perfectly content—happy even; and I believe that this sketch represents the condition of the majority of Pyrenean peasants. If we consult the criminal statistics of France, we find that crime is very rare in the Pyrenees; while the tourist who has travelled much among the peasants will, I am sure, admit that they are far less avaricious than the Helvetians. Indeed, during all my rambles in the Pyrenees, I only met with one case of attempted extortion, and this was from a large hotel-keeper. Whether the Pyrenean peasants will remain honest and pure-minded when projected railways launch crowds of rich tourists among them, I cannot say; but to this period, the intercourse which they have had with travellers and the visitors at the springs have not made them the avaricious, greedy creatures so commonly met with in Switzerland.

And, as confirmatory of this remark, I may state, that it was with some difficulty that I prevailed upon the peasant who had given me his best fare to accept any money.

On resuming my ride down the mountain, I had cause to congratulate myself on having ascended the Pic early in the day. For the ominous morning clouds were now collected in great masses of dense vapour, blotting the distant mountain peaks, and gradually veiling nearer objects. I met several parties toiling up the Pic, who had the sorry prospect of seeing nothing but clouds; and a French lady, mounted on a hopelessly-slow pony, which came to a stand-still near me, bewailed her fate, exclaiming, —"Vous avez bien vu, Monsieur,—mais moi, je ne verrai rien. Ah, mon Dieu, que je suis malheureuse! Mais allez, allez," she continued, poking at the same time her lazy beast, which showed no disposition to indulge her ambition of gaining the summit of the Pic.

CHAP. XI.

Parisian Tourists. — Their Want of Enterprise. — Start for the Brèche de Roland. — Tradition respecting this Locality. — The Gorge of Gavarnie.—L'Échelle.—Val d'Heas.—The Virgin again. — The Lady of Heas.—Gèdre.—Picturesque Mills.—Gavarnie.—The Cirque. — Lofty Waterfall. — The Cylindre. — Remarkable Earthquake.—Cirque de Trémouse.—The Ascent of the Cirque.—Herds of Izzards.—Snow Fields.—Glaciers.—A Slip.—Snow-fall.—Lid de Vent.—Reach the Brèche.—Wild Scene.—The Plains of Arragon.—The Fausse Brèche.—The Marboré.—Gigantic Towers.—A Welcome Repast.—Geology of the Brèche.—The Descent.—Templar's Church at Gavarnie. — The Ride Home. — A Devil among the Mules.—Accident to my Guide.

I HAD hopes that among Madame Cazeaux's guests, I should, in the absence of my countrymen, have found one Frenchman disposed to join me in an excursion to the Brèche de Roland. There were several Parisians at the Hôtel des Pyrénées, calling themselves tourists. Some were willing to go as far as Gavarnie, but as for climbing to the Brèche, the undertaking was far too *pénible;* and when there you were rewarded by seeing nothing but mist. Being determined, notwithstanding these remarks, to make this excursion, I requested Madame Cazeaux to pro-

cure me a good guide, and in the course of the evening she sent me Jacques St. Laur, who, she said, knew the Brèche better than any other man. Jacques was, —is still, I hope,—a sturdy and Titanic mountaineer; and if strength of limb and a sinewy frame cast in the best mould may be considered good qualifications for a guide, Jacques stands unrivalled. His face was bronzed and furrowed by a variety of weather, but his eye remained bright and piercing. To my question whether he was familiar with the Brèche, he replied that he had surmounted every peak from Mont Perdu to the Vignemale, and that he had killed more izzards than any other hunter in Luz. The weather, he added, promised well, but as the excursion was long and arduous, it would be necessary to start very early. Jacques finally engaged to procure two good ponies to carry us to Gavarnie, and Madame Cazeaux promised to store his wallet with refreshments.

The difficulty of ascending to the Brèche de Roland does not consist so much in its height, though this is 9537 feet, as in the nature of the ground to be traversed; and after I had accomplished the undertaking, I no longer wondered that several persons have given in and retraced their steps without attaining the Brèche. Before asking the reader to accom-

pany me to this remarkable mountain scene, it may be well to give a brief sketch of its leading features. On the west flank of the gigantic Mont Perdu rises Mont Marboré, consisting of a series of colossal steps or ledges, from the highest of which a huge rock wall stretches to the west from 400 to 600 feet high, in most places absolutely vertical. This vast natural wall forms the crest of the Pyrenees at this part of the chain, and divides France from Spain. In the middle of the natural barrier is a gap which, seen from a distance, appears a tiny indentation, but which is in reality a magnificent and colossal portal, 134 feet wide and 370 feet high.

Of course legendary lore is not at fault to account in its own poetical manner for this natural wonder, according to which, the Brèche was caused by Roland, the brave Paladin, who, mounted on his war-horse in hot pursuit of the Moors, clove, with one blow of his trusty sword, a passage through this mighty wall. Independently of the Brèche itself, which is highly deserving a visit, the surrounding scenery is of the most imposing and magnificent character, and the excursion justly ranks as one of the most interesting in the entire range of the Pyrenees.

The sun was still far below the mountain tops,

when Jacques, true to his promise, knocked at my door; and after a hasty breakfast we mounted and were off, as the clock of the village church was striking four. The morning broke gloriously. Peak after peak, the snow-crested first, and successively those beneath, became tinted by the rising sun, while the valleys gave evidence of approaching day and warmth by casting off their misty night mantles. The old are young again, and the young feel the blood bounding more briskly through their veins when breathing the air that wraps the Pyrenees in its balmy folds. The beauties and grandeur of the valley or gorge leading to Gavarnie begin at once. Woods, alternating with precipitous rocks, pinnacles of great altitude, the Gave, now deliciously green and peaceful, now worming its way with agonised fury through the gorge; cascades of rare beauty streaming down the precipices, narrow bridges suspended over deep gulfs, and lovely flowers and lichens gemming the ground, and painting the rocks; — such are the characteristic features of this defile.

There is rather an ugly bit of road, called l'Échelle, from its ladder-like nature, about four miles from Luz. The path is carried over and round a precipitous buttress, at a considerable vertical height above the torrent. Leave your pony alone, and he will carry

you safely over this *mauvais pas*, but if you take liberties with his head you may rue your interference. A young Frenchman lost his life here by some such folly. The story runs, that wishing to adjust his stirrups, he pulled his pony's head with considerable violence, when the animal suddenly swerving caused his rider, who must however have been a very bad horseman, to lose his seat, and rolling over the precipice, he was found at the base a mangled corpse.

Near Gèdre, which is about half way to Gavarnie, the mouth of the Val d'Héas is seen. This valley, one of the wildest and most savage in the Pyrenees, is celebrated from the circumstance of the Virgin having been seen by some peasants, many years ago, on the top of a huge rock. She does not seem to have taken shepherd boys or girls into her confidence, as she did when, as we are told, she appeared a few years ago on the mountain of La Salette; but her gracious presence was equally believed by the Pyrenean peasants, and they resolved on building a chapel to commemorate the event. More wonders followed: the builders were daily visited by milk-yielding goats, fed by supernatural agency; and thus favoured, the chapel was soon erected, and is still yearly visited by crowds of believing pilgrims, who carry away fragments of the rock on which our Lady of Héas appeared.

Close to Gèdre, a grand view of the Brèche is obtained, making you wonder from its locality, high amidst the eternal snow-crowned Tours de Marboré, how you are to reach it. At Gèdre, the Marboré disappears, but there is an almost overabundance of grand scenery in the mountains towering to the right and left of that elevation, while their gorges are noisy with foaming cascades which swell the torrent. Close to these cascades—so close that they seem on the point of being swept away—are mills, not much larger than sentry-boxes, one above the other. These mills have very primitive machinery, closely resembling that of the old hand-mill, but they grind the corn—and what more could the best mill in Europe do?

Beyond Gèdre, you come upon a singularly grand and savage scene, called the Peyrada, or Chaos. It consists of an *éboulement*, or slip of vast masses of gneiss, which have fallen from the precipitous sides of Mount Coumélie, and so vast and great is the ruin, that you would suppose an entire mountain had been shivered to supply the blocks which lie around in grand confusion. The path winds, as if it were perplexed how to find an issue from the rocky labyrinth; and the blocks are so huge that my herculean guide seemed a mere pigmy among them.

The mountains increase in majesty as Gavarnie is

approached; the Vignemale with its glaciers to the west, and the Pimené to the east, ranging among the loftiest. Gavarnie is a poor village, amidst sterile and rugged scenery; poor however as it is, I was glad to draw bridle at the door of the little inn, for we had ridden fast, as our panting horses testified. I was about to dismount and recruit myself with a flask of wine, when Jacques peremptorily forbade such a proceeding. There was no time to be lost, he said; a stirrup-cup, and on. He, however, dismounted, and went into the house for a couple of ice staffs and crampons, which are kept at the inn. Provided with these, and partially refreshed by a glass of very good Spanish wine, we hastened on our way. The morning continued highly favourable for our expedition; the mountain summits stood cloudlessly out against the deep blue sky, crowned by myriads of soaring peaks and pinnacles frosted with glittering snow. Wonderful animals are the Pyrenean ponies; ours, though small in stature and limbs, went on with unflagging spirit over ways rough enough to puzzle a goat, rarely pausing to pick their steps, and scarcely ever stumbling. The path, about half way between Gavarnie and the Cirque, is carried over the torrent by two terribly narrow planks, without any manner of railing. Over this frail bridge, not three feet wide, my guide, greatly to my astonishment, rode

his pony; and as my steed evinced no asinine disinclination to follow, but, on the contrary, evidently regarded the proceeding as nothing extraordinary, I slackened the bridle, pressed my knees a little closer to the saddle, and committed myself to my fate. The torrent rushed and roared some twenty feet beneath, but my pony was proof against these things; and what would have tried the nerves of many pedestrians, was so familiar to him, that he passed steadily over the narrow causeway as if it had been a broad highway.

Tourists, and particularly lady-tourists who tremblingly trust themselves on a horse, pony, or mule in the Alps or Pyrenees, would do well to remember, before they make an exhibition of themselves on the verge of precipices, that what appears so terrible in their eyes inspires no alarm to the animal they are riding; whereas uncommon sights and sounds will sometimes startle the most tractable and steady Alpine mule. I saw an amusing instance of this in the Alps. A mule, which had carried a lady without making a false step over a difficult and lofty mountain pass, not having had the advantage of being educated by Mr. Rarey, was so scared by the rustling of a silk umbrella which she unfolded suddenly, as to rear and unseat her, fortunately in a locality where she fell on soft ground.

The passage of the torrent issuing from the Cirque, was the last feat of our horses; for after a brisk canter we dismounted in the arena of the amphitheatre, and turned the animals loose to graze, a girl who had accompanied us from Gavarnie engaging to look after them. We had ridden eighteen miles over a terribly bad road, under three hours, and I doubt if ever the distance has been accomplished in less time, for the greater part of the way must be traversed at walking pace.

To render the first impression of the Cirque or Oule more impressive, a small projecting wall of rock masks the entry to the gigantic amphitheatre. This passed, the end of the world seems gained, for a vast barrier of rocks rises semicircularly before you, to the height of between 1000 and 2000 feet. This gigantic wall is divided by three or four steps or ledges, each supporting a glacier from whence stream cascades. That to the left, as you face the Cirque, is 1266 feet high, and has the reputation of being the loftiest waterfall in Europe. The summit of this wonderful amphitheatre is crowned by perpetual ice and snow resting on the crests of the Cylindre, 10,500 feet high. The base of this fine mountain is embedded in a huge glacier, which gives birth to the high fall. Adjoining the Cylindre rise the

Tours de Marboré, forming gigantic spurs of Mont Perdu. Stunted lichens alone vary the ruggedness of the vast semicircle of rocks, and the only sound breaking the stillness is that of the streaming cascades.

The floor of the Cirque consists of chaotic masses of débris. You would come to the conclusion that some mighty earthquake had hurled the fragments from the precipices:—and not unreasonably; for as recently as the 27th of October, 1835, the Cirque de Troumouse near Gèdre was shaken by an earthquake, which dislodged many rocks. The phenomenon was witnessed by M. Philippe, an eminent naturalist residing at Bagnères de Bigorre, who happened to be at the Cirque when it occurred. In a communication to the Paris Academy of Sciences, he states that the first shock was felt at a quarter to four in the morning. The motion, which was very violent, lasted five seconds, and was succeeded by so remarkable a phenomenon, that I give his own words: "Une colonne d'air sulfuré et brulant enveloppa tout le Cirque, et empêchait toute respiration." Two more shocks were felt, and on his rushing out he says, "Je crus que le Cirque allait se combler, car on ne voyait que blocs roulant de tous côtés."

* Comptes Rendus, t. i. p. 469.

It is worthy of remark, that at this period (autumn of 1835), several earthquakes occurred in the Pyrenees. At St. Bertrand de Comminges a very severe shock was felt on the 27th of October; and at Luz, on the following day, the most violent earthquake within the memory of the oldest inhabitant was experienced.

In all cases the direction of the motion was from west to east, and the greatest intensity near the central chain.

Immediately under the base of the precipices are large heaps of snow, beneath which the waters from the cascades flow, like the torrents spanned by the Alpine snow bridges.

You are unable to take in the sublime spectacle at once, so overpowering are its features; and gazing at the walls of the huge Cirque, seamed by the rushing cascades, you fancy that they are about to fall, and crush you beneath their ruins.

Within a few yards of the last waterfall on your right hand, the ascent to the Brèche is made. Without a guide the precise spot would be exceedingly difficult to find; and from the forbidding nature of the precipice, few would be bold enough to make the essay unadvised. It is literally a natural rock ladder, and is the only spot throughout the wide sweep of the Cirque affording the means of ascent. The rugged

strata, here nearly vertical, afford slight foot and hand-hold; but there are places where the precipice is smooth, and you are puzzled to find a coign of vantage. Here a steady head is requisite, as occasionally you have nothing between you and the bottom of the precipice, but a thin shelf of rock on which you are standing.

As we ascended new wonders were revealed,—precipices, cascades, and glaciers; alternating with wreaths of snow. The top of the great waterfall was still far above us; and you have a very good idea of the altitude of this cascade, when, after more than an hour's ascent, you are still beneath the level of the glacier from whence it is supplied. About two hours were occupied in surmounting the first series of precipices, and then we left the high mountain pastures—called by the peasants Malhada de Serrades, where goats pick up a scanty subsistence and entered the snow fields. Our course now lay through a very steep gully, filled with snow; up this we scrambled, taking advantage of the hardness of the snow to make it our path. Above us rose tremendous precipices, terminating in jagged peaks, on which my guide, with his practised eye, discerned numerous izzards. I saw them extremely well through my telescope, balanced like aërial creatures

on the giddy heights, one of their number evidently acting as sentinel. Their attitudes were very graceful, all being ready at a moment's warning from their watchful leader to bound from crag to crag, or descend precipices untrodden by the foot of man.

My guide, whose heart was more in hunting than in guiding me to the Brèche, became half wild with excitement at the sight of these izzards. He had not seen so numerous a herd before, and with many a *sacré* lamented that he should be without his rifle; though I endeavoured to convince him that it was probably more advantageous in a pecuniary point of view to act as my guide, than to run the very doubtful chance of killing an izzard, which, after all the toil of carrying it down the mountain, would only realise twelve francs, that being the usual price given for one of these animals by the hotel keepers.

We now fairly lost sight of the Cirque, and were in the midst of snow and glaciers, at a steep incline of about forty-five degrees. The climbing of this slope was most fatiguing to me, as the frozen snow was very slippery, and I retrograded nearly as often as I advanced. This part of the ascent occupied about an hour. My guide now turned to the left, for the purpose of crossing a glacier so highly inclined, that it cannot be ascended in a direct

line. The passage of this glacier, beyond which lies the Brèche, is by far the most dangerous part of the undertaking. At the place where we encountered the ice, the breadth of the glacier may be about 400 yards, but throughout, the inclination of the smooth polished ice is such, that a false step might prove fatal; for beneath are grim precipices. I was quite exhausted when we came to the edge of this glacier, and despite the protestations of my guide, threw myself on the snow, and would, had I been left alone, have been asleep in a few moments. But Jacques was obdurate, and, measuring my strength by his own, would hear of no delay; so when he had strapped crampons on my feet, I rose and trod cautiously in the notches which he cut in the ice. For a few minutes all went well, but when about half-way across, I stumbled, fell, and for a moment gave myself up for lost. Happily, Jacques was sufficiently near to grasp my outstretched arms, and calling out "Courage, courage!" assisted me to rise, which I did with no further mishap than a slight bruise, and the loss of my stick, which went flying down the ice slope. Then it was that I became fully aware of the mistake I had made, in not having started from Gavarnie instead of from Luz, as the rough and fatiguing ride from the latter place is not a

good prelude to the undertaking of ascending to the Brèche.

My escape was rendered the more interesting by a story which my guide related of an unfortunate man, who slipped while crossing this glacier, and being unable to recover his feet, sped down the ice with the speed of an avalanche, and was almost instantaneously lost for ever, for his companions were unable to render him the slightest assistance.

> "As he drifted on his path,
> There was silence deep as death,
> And the boldest held his breath
> For a time."

Bracing my nerves, I resumed my slippery walk, taking care to hold my guide's hand, and resting occasionally. During one of these pauses, a dull sound fell on my ear, and looking in the direction from whence the noise proceeded, I saw a grand snowfall streaming from one of the upper ledges of the Marboré. Down it plunged with increasing roar, as the white mass loosened and gathered the snow in its course; but before reaching the ledge below, a *tourmente*, or sudden gust of wind, caught the snowfall, and sent the scattered fragments whirling high in the air. The effect was extremely grand.

This phenomenon is called in the Pyrenees, La Lid de Vent, in contradistinction to La Lid de Terre; the snow in the first instance being, as I have described, borne upwards, sometimes whelming unfortunate mountaineers; while in the other case the snow descends, like the Swiss avalanche, into the valleys.

At length I had the inexpressible satisfaction of achieving the passage of this formidable glacier. The rest of the climb was comparatively easy, though the steepness of the ascent, and the slippery nature of the footing, were trying enough. But all sense of fatigue forsook me when the huge portal, the tiny notch as seen from the valley near Gèdre, yawned in all its stern magnificence before me. The spectacle was a reward for all my toil; and I felt that I would have willingly endured even greater fatigue to make acquaintance with such a scene as now met my astonished gaze.

Eager to attain the limit of my undertaking, I hastened onwards, and with beating heart soon stood within the jaws of the mighty portal, through which roared the rushing wind. A step more, and I was in Spain. Smooth glaciers slope away on each side of the wall; but opposite the Brèche, the action of the sun and force of the wind, here rarely at rest, through

the great rock-rent, have tortured the ice and frozen snow into weird forms, leaving the rock entirely bare in front of the Brèche.

A wild world of barren mountains appears to the south, those in the foreground being covered with snow, the more distant looming hazily over the plains of Arragon. With a powerful telescope Saragossa, it is said, may be seen, if the atmosphere be clear; but although my glass was good, and the weather favourable, I could not discern it.

Towards France the scene is softer. Mountains are there too, sky-piled; but also forests, the home of wolves and bears, emerald vales, silver streams, and gleaming lakes. But how hope to portray the mighty panorama of mountains and rocky pinnacles,—

> "——— dark heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime,
> The image of eternity, the Throne
> Of the Invisible!"

The wall, however, here about 600 feet high and 80 feet thick, is the great feature of the scene. Besides the Brèche de Roland, there is another opening in the wall to the west, called the Fausse Brèche. The precipices and glaciers between this and the Taillon, a lofty mountain which rises west of the

false breach, are very grand; but the proportions of this gap are much inferior to those of the grand Brèche.

The walls on either side of this breach are rendered still more imposing by being dominated by the Marboré, the towers of which seem like a gigantic citadel protecting the approaches. And the similitude to a huge fortification is increased by the circumstance, that at each extremity of the wall, and close to the breach, is a hole, which fancy suggests might have been pierced for Titanic cannon.

Jacques now produced the contents of his wallet, which, thanks to Madame Cazeaux's provident forethought, were good and abundant; and, having placed the wine-flasks in the ice (there was enough at hand to ice the great Heidelberg tun), I sat on the ridge of the Brèche, one leg in Spain, the other in France, with my body in amiable neutrality. Oh the delight of that repast! there never was a more tender fowl, crisper salad, or wine more delicious.

While thus occupied in refreshing exhausted nature, I forgot that the terrible glacier had to be re-crossed, and the steep snow-slopes to be descended.

The day continued faithful to its morning promise. A bright sun—unfelt, however, at this great elevation—poured down a flood of light on the far-

stretching glaciers and snow-fields, on which we discerned izzards, appearing like tiny black spots. These and a few eagles were the only living things within sight.

But at the Brèche de Roland life seems out of place; and when the guide showed me a small cave at the base of the wall, where contrabandistas take refuge when overtaken by *tourmentes*, I was glad that not even one of these wild beings appeared, however much he might have been in keeping with the scene.

'Tis a spot to let thoughts loose,—to fancy the stupendous spectacle when this mighty wall came hissing from the deep (for all around was once the ocean floor),—a colossal volcanic rock-wave, at whose upheaval myriads of fragile forms which lived in the depths of the sea perished. No monuments of man are here to mark the lapse of time; but millions of years have probably passed over these pyramids of nature.

The temptation was great to spend many hours in these speculations; but, as the day was fast waning, Jacques very properly urged our departure. Being considerably recruited in strength, I found the passage of the glacier less arduous than I apprehended; and, having crossed the ice safely, we sped down the snow-inclines with delightful rapidity, passing over

ground in five minutes which cost us an hour to ascend. Then picking our way carefully down the rock-ladder, we arrived at the base of the Cirque, caught our ponies, which had acquired such aldermanic proportions by their hearty grass-feed as to render saddling a difficult operation, mounted, and rode to Gavarnie, where we arrived at seven o'clock.

Leaving Jacques to pay for the crampons and order some wine, I went to see the village church, in which they show twelve skulls, said to be those of Knights Templars who were decapitated when their Order was suppressed. The building is in no manner remarkable; and as for the skulls, they are more probably those of peasants, and one unquestionably is that of a girl.

Now, thought I, when we had remounted, and were *en route* for Luz, the incidents of the day are over, and we shall have a pleasant ride home, for after the arduous climb it was very enjoyable to be in the saddle again. But events fell out otherwise. We had jogged on without any mishap to the edge of the "Chaos," when, just as we were entering the rocky labyrinth, I, being in advance, saw the narrow pathway entirely taken up by a numerous troop of Spanish mules, plodding on under their bulky loads. Having tried in vain to force my pony through

them, I drew up, and desired Jacques to effect a passage. Plunging his spurs into his pony's flanks, and with a loud shout, he dashed in amongst the mules, but he was no sooner in the midst of them than they closed round his pony and commenced a furious attack on man and beast. You would have said that some wicked devil possessed them, so loud did they scream, so savagely did they bite, and so fiercely did they kick. Their hoofs resounded on poor Jacques' legs and thighs, and fell so thick and heavy, that I could come to no other conclusion than that every bone was broken. Of course the muleteers interposed, but their well-applied whips seemed only to madden the mules more, and I confess, when the infuriated brutes succeeded in kicking Jacques out of his saddle, and I beheld him sprawling among the rocks, I thought his izzard-hunting days were numbered.

At length the savage and half-mad mules were beaten off, and I was enabled to approach my prostrate guide, who lay moaning, rubbing his battered legs and shins. Presently, to my great relief, he scrambled up, and finding he was able to stand, I came to the conclusion that no bones were broken, but he was grievously cut and bruised. Aided by a couple of muleteers, I led him to a neighbouring cottage, and at his request bathed his limbs with a strong solution

of salt and water. This application was very beneficial, and having continued it for about an hour, Jacques thought that he could ride home. His poor pony, which had been greatly battered in the *mêlée*, was accordingly led to the door, and after two or three ineffectual attempts, he succeeded in gaining the saddle. As may be supposed, we rode very slowly, and did not reach Luz, until the evening was far advanced.

CHAP. XII.

Wild Dreamland. — The Gave de Bastan. — Box-trees. — Uses of the Box in the Pyrenees. — Its supposed Virtues. — Topiary Work. — Verdant Sculpture. — Barèges. — Repulsive Invalids. — Temporary Houses. — Geology of Barèges. — Packing-up Houses. — The Springs. — Their Speciality. — Nauseous Water. — Analysis of the Barèges Water. — Barégine. — How to economise Water. — Military Hospital. — Tariff of the Baths. — Frightful Diseases. — The Duc de Maine. — Madame de Maintenon. — Clamorous Mendicants. — Wild Mountain Land. — Val de Lientz. — Extensive Communes. — Curious Communal Ceremony. — Val d'Escoubous. — The Néouvielle Mountain. — Stupendous Amphitheatre. — Golden Tradition. — Curious Acoustical Effects. — Noises among Mountains. — Humboldt's Theory. — Remarkable Sounds. — Return to Luz.

What wonder if all night long I was endeavouring to surmount unsurmountable precipices — slipping down glaciers — rushing over snow slopes — riding plunging dragons and other mythological beasts in wild dreamland — for muscles and nerves were overstrained and overwrought, and I trembled like an aspen leaf. A ride, and such a ride, of thirty-six miles and the ascent of the Brèche, all in one day. Well might Jacques say it would require a long day for the undertaking.

Of course my first care in the morning was to go and see the bruised man. He was better; so much so, that he thought, after a day or two's rest, he should be able to act as guide again: but the izzard must be left unhunted by him for many days. Then I went to see the pony he had ridden, and was gratified to find that the poor animal was not seriously injured, though much cut about the legs.

I was in no humour for much mountain climbing to-day, but as it would have been equally disagreeable to remain at Luz doing nothing, I resolved on riding to Barèges, which, if not the most picturesque, is by far the most celebrated of the Pyrenean brunnens.

The road lies through the Val Bastan, continually ascending by the side of the Gave of that name, which is one of the most riotous and desolating torrents in the Pyrenees. Even in summer the Gave de Bastan is a noisy watercourse, though you would not imagine, from the variety of lovely flowers gemming its banks, that the valley is yearly devastated by the floods which pour down from the surrounding mountains after heavy rain. About a couple of miles from Luz, the valley contracts, and the vegetation of the defile is confined to shrubs, among which the common box is very conspicuous.

This tree is extremely common throughout the Pyrenees, flourishing on the ledges of precipices, where you would think it impossible for any plant even to live. In these localities, however, the box never grows larger than a shrub, but there are places in the Pyrenees where it attains the dimensions of a tree, though the stem is not sufficiently large for wood-engraving purposes. The Pyrenean box-wood is used for articles of turnery and combs, the manufacture of which affords employment to a considerable number of persons.

Some idea may be formed of the value of this wood from the circumstance that the box-trees which were cut down on Box Hill in Surrey in 1815 realised upwards of 10,000*l.*, and they had not attained any great size. The leaves and twigs of the box are also used largely in the Pyrenees as fuel for ovens, when a fierce and enduring heat is required. The Pyrenean peasants extract an empyreumatic oil from the bark and leaves, which quack-doctor lore prescribes as a rare specific for tooth and other aches. But box-wood had formerly a European reputation for curative properties, a tincture having been made from it, which was celebrated throughout Germany as a cure for intermittent fevers, and to this day the box enters largely into the composition of various

medicated oils, which are believed to possess hair-restoring powers.

The soil in the south of France is particularly favourable to the growth of the box-tree. The gardens throughout Provence are more than usually prim and stiff by knots and figures formed by trees of this description fantastically trimmed.

'Tis a time-honoured custom; for does not Pliny gossip of the figures fashioned from box-trees growing on the lawn of his Tusculan villa, and Vitruvius recommend the box on account of its patience under the knife for topiary work?—*topiarius*, or the art of cutting trees into quaint shapes, being esteemed high gardening among the wealthy Romans. Nor was England at one time behind continental nations in a love for verdant sculpture. The wretched taste did not, however, last long, and its short reign may perhaps be in some measure due to the cutting criticism with which it was assailed. See, for example, the "Guardian," in which Pope, in a paper of infinite humour, describes a garden where

"Ships of myrtle sail in seas of box,"

and declares that "we seem now to make it our study in gardening to recede from Nature not only in the various tonsure of greens into the most formal

shapes, but even in monstrous attempts beyond the reach of art itself."

Nothing but dire necessity would tempt you to stay at Barèges more than a few hours; for independently of its situation, which has scarcely a redeeming feature, almost every one you meet is crippled, wounded, or in other respects diseased in body, and unlovely in appearance. The ground on which the permanent houses of Barèges stand is so limited in extent, that they are necessarily few in number, and although erected on the most eligible locality, are perpetually subject to the risk of being overwhelmed by éboulements from the mountain which rises precipitously immediately behind them, or swept away by the torrent before them. Buttresses of great strength prop these buildings, but even with this protection they are occasionally seriously injured, and a few years ago were nearly annihilated by the bursting of the Lac d'Oncet on the slopes of the Pic du Midi.

The mountains impending over Barèges are composed almost entirely of clay slate, coated by vast alluvial deposits which frequently descend in the form of mud avalanches. This soil is highly unfavourable to vegetation. Even the hardy pine cannot thrive at Barèges, and the few straggling trees above the town

are so stunted that they look on the seared face of nature like the result of an abortive attempt to grow a beard on that of man.

Barèges in summer consists of numerous temporary wood tenements, which far outnumber the permanent houses, and afford accommodation to the visitors. Many of them are also devoted to purposes of trade, and the names and business of the shopkeepers are announced on strips of red cloth hung over the doors. The articles sold are for the most part exceedingly trashy; but the traders doubtless know their customers' wants, and the depth of their purses. I asked the price of "Barèges," not by the way made here but at Bagnères, and found it to be actually dearer than you can buy it in London: however, the shopkeeper was quite willing to bargain. These wood structures are set up at the beginning of April, care being taken to plant them at a respectful distance from the torrent; and at the end of the season they are taken down and stowed away until the following spring. Thus the population of Barèges in winter, when the snow is fifteen feet deep, does not amount to more than about fifty persons, whereas in the height of the season it frequently exceeds two thousand.

In consequence of the great accumulation of slaty

débris and alluvial deposit, it is very difficult to ascertain the precise spot where the springs rise. Some have disappeared entirely, and one which had ceased flowing was reopened by boring. There is no doubt, however, that here, as elsewhere in the Pyrenees, the springs rise at the junction of the slate and granite. Professor J. Forbes says that "they owe their origin to the altered slate rock in the vicinity, and more remotely to the granite of the Néouvielle mountain, which probably produced the alteration." This mountain rises a little to the south-east of Barèges.

The height of Barèges is 4163 feet above the sea, and the temperature of the Tambour, the hottest spring, is 111° 9′. The great speciality of the Barèges waters consists in their remarkable power of curing wounds, and particularly those caused by gunshots; but they have other curative properties. They are used externally and internally. In the form of a bath they may be endurable, — an old *piscine* is called *Le Bain des Délices*, — but taken internally they are most nauseous, leaving an *arrière-goût* for an indefinite length of time. I inconsiderately tasted the water, and if you are curious to know what it is like, you may be satisfied without going to Barèges, by tasting a mixture of rotten eggs and the rinsings of a

foul gun-barrel.* When the water is allowed to rest for some time, a curious deposit, consisting of a greasy, amorphous, gelatinous substance, first discovered in the Barèges water, and thence named barégine, is found. This substance, which is not confined to the springs of Barèges, is a great scientific puzzle. Microscopical examination shows that barégine consists of infusoria, and when cast on a fire it emits a smell like that of burnt horn; but where the organic dépôt exists, from whence this apparently inexhaustible supply of barégine is derived, finite geological knowledge fails to answer.

The supply of water being quite unequal to the demand, some of the springs are said to be made to do double duty, the water being turned into the drinking department of the establishment after it has been used for bathing purposes. Barèges water is foul enough, heaven knows, in its natural state; but one recoils at the bare idea even of drinking it,

* Here is the analysis of the Barèges water from the Tambour:—

Carbonate of soda . .	Traces.
Sulphate of soda . . .	0·0330
Sulphate of lime . . .	0·0640
Chloride of soda . . .	0·1170
do. of potassium . .	Traces.
do. of magnesia . .	
Silicate of soda . . .	0·1060
Oxide of iron . . .	0·0300

when polluted by sloughing wounds, gangrenous sores, and scrofulous eruptions. This economical notion is not, however, new; something of the same kind is said to have been perpetrated at Bath, when that place was in vogue, for the particulars of which see "The New Bath Guide."

The French Government has erected a military hospital at Barèges, capable of containing four hundred and twenty men, and about one hundred officers; but the accommodation is far below the requirements, though no military patient is allowed to remain in hospital more than fifty days. Stringent regulations are enforced respecting the use of the water reserved for civilians, and those placed at the disposition of the poor; but with every regard for economy of time as well as water, the springs are used during the whole of the night as well as day.*

If you are curious in diseases, and desire to see the dark side of physical humanity in the Pyrenees, go to the baths reserved for the poor at Barèges. Round them all day long are ugly and limping hags, bending beneath the weight of pendant goitres;

* Here is the *tarif*:—"Boisson, gratuite; bain, 1 franc; douche, 1 fr.; linge, 20 centimes. De 5 heures du matin à 8 heures, un bain d'une heure, dans la piscine civile, se paye 1 fr.; après 8 heures, 25 centimes."

shrivelled men, reeling on contorted limbs, and puny, rickety children, whose parents hope for their restoration to health and strength. Nor unreasonably, for was not the young Duc de Maine, the natural child of Louis XIV., by his mistress Madame de Montespan, so far cured by the Barèges waters of some crippling disease, that when he returned to Paris he walked into the king's apartment to the great joy of delighted papa. Madame de Maintenon, who was the Duc's *gouvernante*, and travelled to the springs along a wretched path cut expressly for her from Bagnères de Bigorre across the Tourmalet, seems to have had a dreary time of it at Barèges, for she says, in one of many letters written from that place, *pour se distraire*:—"Vous voyez que je prends courage dans un lieu plus affreux que je ne puis vous le dire; pour comble de misère nous y gelons. La compagnie y est mauvaise; on nous respecte et on nous ennuie."

But Madame de Maintenon's devotion to her little patient—he was seven years old—was rewarded; for the king was, as we have seen, so highly pleased with the change in his son's health, that Madame was promoted from *gouvernante* to high Court affairs. Madame de Sévigné, writing the Court gossip of the day, says:—"Madame de Maintenon est encore plus triomphante; tout est soumis à son empire;

toutes les femmes de chambre de sa *voisine* (poor dethroned Madame de Montespan) sont à elle; l'une lui tient le pot à pâte à genoux devant elle; l'autre lui apporte ses gants; l'autre l'endort; elle ne *salue personne.*" *

How all this ended is matter of well-known history; but we may speculate whether France would have had fewer troubles and less oppression had the Barèges waters not cured the limping Duc de Mainé. They did, however, cure him, and what they cured two centuries ago they cure now; a great and consoling fact for invalids, proving that the waters are not, as doctors allege is the case with other springs, variable and inconstant in their effects.

It was very refreshing to escape from the depressing influence of Barèges to the wild uplands above the town. With considerable difficulty I managed to shake off the last beggar who clung to me, clamouring for a sous, *pour carità* and *l'amour de Diou,*—in vain, however, for my stock of sous had long since been bestowed on the numerous troops of mendicants in Barèges, wretched objects, who were evidently in great distress. Mendicancy in the Pyrenees is unhappily carried to such an extent, as

* Lettres, Mai 6, 1676.

to be a great drawback to the traveller's enjoyment. Tawny little urchins pounce upon you at the threshold of every village, offering a flower, a stone, a butterfly, anything that comes to hand, and soliciting the much-desired sous, or "quelque chose." Nor are the beggars confined to the juvenile population, for I have often been asked for money by peasants occupied in tilling their own ground.

Instead of pursuing the mountain road to Bagnères de Bigorre, I diverged to the right, along a torrent-torn path, leading to the Val de Lientz, between the Néouvielle and Pic d'Espade. This valley is inhabited during the summer months by Béarnais shepherds, who tend their flocks on the extensive communal pastures in this elevated region.* Remembering, perhaps, the rich pastures of England, you marvel how any animal can pick up a subsistence on the stunted vegetation which scarcely masks the stony soil. But the sheep are by no means in poor condition, and if unfit to contend for a prize with morbidly fat South Downs, they make sweet and excellent mutton. Indeed, the grass of the

* The following table, extracted from an interesting article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1859, "Sur les Biens Communaux en France," shows how rich the inhabitants of the Pyrenees are in this description of property. "Les départements les plus riches en

Val dè Lientz, scanty though it be, is nevertheless of such value as to occasion frequent disputes respecting rights of pasturage between the Spanish and French peasants, who all through the Pyrenees are not very particular in observing the geographical line of demarcation between the two countries.

In order to avert these disputes, and to maintain peace on the border land, a curious ceremony is observed annually on the 13th June, by the jurats or magistrates, farming the commune belonging to Béarn, and those managing the Spanish commune of Boncal. Deputies, representing the two parties, assemble on neutral ground, and when the boundary line has been fixed, a cross is erected. The deputies

biens communaux sont les suivants, qui possèdent à eux seuls plus de la moitié des terres vaines et vagues : —

	Hectares.
Les Landes . . .	266,704
Les Hautes Alpes . .	259,371
Les Basses Alpes . .	150,895
Les Basses Pyrénées . .	147,074
La Gironde . . .	146,279
Les Hautes Pyrénées .	134,357
L'Isère	126,842
L'Aude	109,160
Le Bas Rhin . . .	97,567
La Creuse . . .	95,156
La Moselle . . .	68,250
Total	1,601,655"

then place their right hand on the cross, and repeat five times, *Pats a bana*— Peace for the future. An interchange of hospitalities between French and Spaniards follows, and promises are made to respect rights of pasture, which are frequently broken before the summer is over.

Having no particular object in view, I rode on, until the path, indistinct from the first, ceased to exist, and when I had passed the last shepherd's hut, I was fairly alone amidst the trackless mountains. And when not time-tied, few things are more enjoyable in an unknown country, than to wander away from beaten tracks laid down in guide-books, utterly ignorant of the nature of the scenery which lies before you. That in the Val d'Escabous is savagely grand, particularly the portion of the valley overhung by the Néouvielle. A short way beyond this, you gain a stupendous amphitheatre, dominated on the south by that mountain and a crowd of pinnacles, and on the north by the Pic du Midi. Dismounting, I allowed my pony to pick what he could, while I clambered to the summit of a projecting buttress. From this I enjoyed a rare view of noble mountain forms. Immediately before me rose the Pic de Miaritz, the legend land of the shepherds, who have a tradition that the mountain contains heaps of gold and silver concealed by

the English, when they lost their possessions in the south of France. On the left towered the Pic d'Ayse, a grandly formed schistose mountain, and in the distance gleamed the tiny lakes of Glaire and Combe-Seure.

The air was nearly at rest, an unusual circumstance in the Pyrenees, and the fleecy clouds which wrapped the majestic heave of the mountain's sides, seemed almost motionless. I mention these facts, because here I heard more distinctly than on any other occasion, the peculiar moaning sound which has been noted by other wanderers among mountains.

The influences of the scenery were very great, and highly calculated to awaken many sensations; but there were no waterfalls, no foaming stream, nor indeed anything in motion that I could see, to account for the strange murmurs which rose and fell, independently too of any movement of the atmosphere.

Noises among mountains are so common as generally to merit little or no attention. In fact, the air in elevated mountain ranges is so rarely still, that gorges and defiles are like Prospero's island,

> —"full of noises;
> Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."

But I now allude more particularly to a peculiar

humming tone, occasionally heard when the air is perfectly calm, as if the strings of a gigantic Æolian harp hanging high among the peaks were swept by winds unfelt below.

Conversing on this subject with a friend, my attention was directed to an interesting paper in the eighth volume of the New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, "On Peculiar Noises occasionally heard in particular Districts," where the anonymous author states that he heard a sound proceeding from the Maladetta. He left Luchon with a friend for the Port de Venasque, and when there, he says, "We were most forcibly struck with a dull, low, moaning sound, which alone broke upon the deathly silence evidently proceeding from the Maladetta mountain, though we in vain attempted to connect it with any particular spot, or assign an adequate cause for these solemn strains. The air was perfectly calm, the sky was cloudless, and the atmosphere clear to that extraordinary degree, conceivable only by those familiar with the elevated regions of southern climates. So clear and pure, indeed, that at noon a bright star which had attracted our notice throughout the grey of the morning still remained visible in the zenith. By the naked eye, therefore, and still more with the assistance of the telescope, any waterfalls of sufficient magnitude would

have been distinguishable on a front base, and exposed before us; but not a stream was to be detected, and the bed of what gave tokens of being occasionally a strong torrent, intersecting the valley at its foot, was then nearly dry. I will not presume to assert that the sun's rays, though at the moment impinging in all their glory on every point and peak of the snowy heights, had any share in vibrating these mountain chords; but on a subsequent visit a few days afterwards, when I went alone to explore this wild scenery, and at the same hour stood on the same spot, I listened in vain for the moaning sounds; the air was equally calm, but the sun was hidden by clouds, and a cap of dense mist hung over the greater portion of the mountain."

When I visited the Port de Venasque, a terrific storm swept through the pass, shrieking among the jagged peaks and pinnacles, so that I cannot confirm by my own experience the foregoing account of soft moanings proceeding from the Maladetta; but, as I have stated, I have heard similar noises in other mountains besides the Pyrenees.

The illustrious Humboldt, in his comprehensive and searching inquiries into natural phenomena, has not omitted these mysterious mountain melodies. He gives an account of the organ-like sounds heard

at sunrise, supposed to proceed from granite rocks on the banks of the Oronoko, and ascribes these and other noises to undulations of the atmosphere, caused by different parts of the earth being unequally heated.

How a slight cause produces, under favourable acoustical circumstances, considerable noise, is well known, though very imperfectly understood. We have a remarkable instance of this in the loud noise produced by the sand, when set in motion at Nakuh, on Mount Sinai. Professor Ehrenberg visited this hill for the express purpose of ascertaining the cause of the sound, and, after a long and patient investigation, came to the conclusion that the motion of the sand was the cause. "Every step he and his companion took caused a partial sound, occasioned by the sand thus set in motion. Beginning with a soft rustling, it passed gradually into a murmuring, then into a humming noise, and at length into a threatening of such violence, that it could only be compared to a distant cannonade, had it been more continued and uniform. As the sand gradually settled again, the noise also gradually ceased."

When we find noise of this great intensity produced by such a cause, and remember the enormous distance that sound travels under favourable atmo-

spherical circumstances, we can easily understand why we hear noises among mountains during a still day, when we know that the cause may be even very distant. The fall, for example, of snow in the lofty heights of some far-off mountain, which is heard in thunder tones by the spectator, may occasion undulations in the atmosphere which, travelling through many folds of hills and mountains, fall on our ear when we are miles from the avalanche like soft moans.* Occasionally, however, from ignorance of the cause, sounds are certainly very perplexing.

A curious case of this kind came under my observation, of an entire household being disturbed by loud and incomprehensible noises. The family occupied a house in the country, built round a quadrangle. There were no cellars, and the living-rooms were on the ground floor. For some years after they took possession of the house nothing remarkable

* F. von Tschudi observes in his "Sketches of Nature in the Alps," that "The laws of sound connected with that region are as peculiar as they are elsewhere in the mountains. Travellers relate that, when standing on the Hohgant, they have been able to hear distinctly the thundering sound which accompanied some fracture of the glacier on the Jungfrau six leagues off, the noise not having been heard in the adjacent valley of Lauterbrunn; on the other hand, the loudest rifle-shot let off at the top of the mountain sounds like the crack of a whip, and can scarcely be heard at the distance of half a league below."

was heard; when suddenly, in mid-winter, they were startled during the night by a deep, rumbling, subterranean sound, followed quickly by a succession of similar though not equally loud noises. Month after month, sometimes daily and nightly, but more generally at intervals of two or three weeks, these noises were heard; and although every means were tried to solve the acoustical problem, the cause remained unknown. Of course the domestics came early to the conclusion that the house was haunted; and as there was a ruined abbey on the estate, to which various superstitions attached, a report that the house was haunted by the spirit of some unquiet monk rapidly gained ground. At length, but not before the family had experienced considerable inconvenience by the difficulty of retaining servants, an old farmer solved the mystery. The mouth of an ancient and very deep draw-well in one corner of the quadrangle had been filled up many years before the family acquired possession of the house, and no one about the place had any knowledge of the former existence of the well. Nor was there anything to mark its locality, as the mouth, after having been stopped, was paved like the rest of the quadrangle. For some years the stopping kept in its place, but eventually, being probably affected by the percolation of rain, masses

of earth were precipitated into the water, thus occasioning the subterranean sounds, which by some favourable acoustic properties were not only conveyed into, but through the house, in a very startling and remarkable manner as I can testify, having heard the noises more than once. The well was re-opened, effectually filled, and the sounds were heard no more. It is worthy of remark that a phenomenon similar to this, but on a colossal scale, is supposed by Boussingault and other philosophers, to take place in the Andes, producing those earthquakes which convulse that region. They conceive that the colossal cones and dome-shaped summits of the Cordilleras, composed of masses of trachyte and dolerite, were not upheaved in a state of softness or semi-fluidity, but consist of enormous angular fragments pushed up and heaped one upon another. This would occasion the formation of great cavities, and consequently, by subsidence and the fall of imperfectly supported masses, commotions accompanied by loud noises would ensue.*

While expressing a belief that searching philosophical inquiry would lead to the solution of all noises, whether heard in the chamber at midnight or on the

* See for a fuller account of this interesting hypothesis, Cosmos, vol. iv., section Earthquakes.

mountain top at noon, I am quite willing to admit that Madame de Staël, taking the advantage of our ignorance of the delicate laws of acoustics, is poetically justified in ascribing, as she does in the following passage, incomprehensible sounds to the voice of nature: "Sur les côtes de l'Asie, où l'atmosphère est pur, on entend quelquefois le soir une harmonie plaintive et douce que la nature semble adresser à l'homme, afin de lui apprendre qu'elle respire, qu'elle aime, et qu'elle souffre."

But it is time to look after our pony. Poor beast, he has no disinclination to be caught, for here are no fat pastures, and he will fare better in his stable at Luz. So we jog homewards, and are glad, after the sterile aridity of the mountains above Barèges, to plunge our eyes into the dark green woods at Luz; greener and darker now, for the sun has set when we halt before the door of the Hôtel des Pyrénées.

CHAP. XIII.

Froissart's Bagnères de Bigorre. — Modern Bagnères. — Liberty in France. — The Thermal Springs. — Vicus Aquensis. — Cæsar's Temple.—Roman Mural Tablets. — Properties of the Waters.— Situation of Bagnères. — Geological Features. — Earthquakes. — Temperature of the Springs.—Tariff of the Baths. — Ferruginous Spring.—Fashionable Costume.—Peasants' Ball. — Béarnais Ballads. — An Itinerant Pyrotechnist. — Quack Doctors. — Dentist from Paris.—Deluded Peasants.—Val Campan. — Val d'Esponne. — Pic de Montaigu. — Grand Scenery. — Village of Esponne. — Wedding Festivities. — Ancient Marriage Customs. — Curious Courtship.—Nuptial Chants.—Strange Superstition.

BAGNÈRES, said Froissart, is "une bonne grosse ville fermée, sur la rivière de Lisse." Bagnères, says a modern French guide-book, is "une riante et coquette petite ville de huit mille âmes de population fixe."

The old chronicler was doubtless correct in his description; but four centuries and a half have passed since he wrote, and the warriors who rendered gates necessary—

> "Are dust,
> Their swords but rust,
> Their souls are with the saints we trust;"

and Bagnères, no longer subject to any invasion but that of summer visitors, who swell her population to

18,000, has knocked down her walls, put on a modern dress, and is precisely what the guide-book says, a coquettish little town.

I journeyed from Luz to this metropolis of the Pyrenean brunnens in a diligence. 'Tis a lovely drive of about nine hours, and if you are in the *coupé* or the *banquette* you have excellent opportunities of seeing the scenery, as there are many hills up which the ponderous vehicle is dragged by oxen as well as horses. At the foot of each hill, the conductor opened the doors, and graciously smiling, said, "Messieurs et Mesdames, vous avez le droit de vous promener." This being one of the few "droits" left to the enjoyment of Frenchmen in their despotically governed country, the passengers availed themselves of the privilege, and so slow was the progress of the diligence up the steeps, that we had long rests on the hill tops, and time to run truant among the vines, which, as you approach Bagnères, are festooned from tree to tree.

On arriving at Bagnères, as soon as I had shaken the dust and hotel touters off, I went in search of a lodging, and fortunately secured very good quarters in the Maison Jalon, where, besides the advantage of a reading-room in the house, well provided with books and papers, I enjoyed extremely pleasant society. The Maison Jalon, an excellent boarding-house, is situated at the corner of the Place d'Uzer, opposite the large

and handsome baths, built of marble from the Val Campan. Sparkling waters gush perpetually from the baths, and a fountain in the middle of the place is the constant resort of picturesquely dressed girls, admirable studies for the figure sketcher.

Bagnères de Bigorre merits its metropolitan reputation. Twenty-seven public springs bubble up within and near the town, and there are private sources supplying baths in many houses. The bath-loving Romans, who have left their mark on all brunnens within their once extensive dominions, seem to have been particularly pleased with Bagnères, to which they gave the name of *Vicus Aquensis*. Bagnères, in the Gascon idiom, has the same signification. The Romans appear to have taught the conquered inhabitants of Bagnères the value of the aqueous wealth around them; and these, from motives of gratitude perhaps, or to conciliate Cæsar, erected a temple to the divinity of their conqueror, on which the following inscription was placed:

NVMINI AVGVSTI SACRVM,
SECVNDVS SEMBEDONIS FILIVS,
NOMINE VICANORVM AQVENSIVM ET SVO POSVIT.

The Romans themselves have left mural tablets, commemorative of their gratitude to the healing nymphs.

There is one now built over the architrave of the entrance to the Maison Jalon,—

NYMPHIS PRO SALVTE SVA SEVER. SERANVS.
V. S. L. M.

The initial letters of the last line have been rendered, "Votum solvit lubens merito." Other relics of the Romans exist in the small museum of antiquities at Bagnères, showing that those people made great use of the springs.

These, unlike most of the Pyrenean thermal waters, are not sulphurous but saline, containing salts of lime, magnesia, and soda. Ask what complaints they are believed to be good for, and you will probably be told — all. The opinion of M. Sarabeyrouse, who was commissioned by the French Government to report on them, is more precise: "Les sources thermales de Bagnères possèdent en général, au degré le plus avantageux, toutes les propriétés qui sont le partage de la classe d'eaux minérales salines à laquelle elles appartiennent. En effet, elles sont plus diurétiques qu'aucune de celles qui les avoisinent; elles sont purgatives et fortifient puissament l'estomac et les intestins en les débarassant des mucosités qui peuvent s'y être accumulées; elles réveillent l'energie des facultés digestives, et raniment l'action organique des

solides, de manière a faciliter l'exercice de toutes les fonctions."

There are, indeed, springs sufficient to cure multitudes suffering from all manner of diseases, if water application was alone necessary. "Se baigner est chose salubre," said Montaigne, who visited Bagnères *pour s'amuser*, and when you have seen the visitors of this gay place you can arrive at no other conclusion than that they are more bent on amusement than water-drinking. But, as a Bagnères doctor informed me, the waters "excitent dans l'économie animale des mouvements qui sont salutairement perturbateurs," and he gave me a book which contains accounts of wonderful cures effected by them when taken internally. The truth is, as another physician stated, that the Bagnères medicinal springs, like those elsewhere, cure sometimes, relieve often, comfort always.

The situation of Bagnères on swelling plains at the outskirts of the great range of mountains is extremely favourable. The Pic du Midi, towering over gloomy Bedât, and a host of inferior elevations, are sufficiently near for all picturesque purposes; while you are not confined, as at Cauterets or Eaux Bonnes, in a gorge, but can ride or walk in various directions without being perpetually on an incline.

Indeed, the locality of Bagnères is so different to

that of the majority of springs in the Pyrenees, that one is quite unprepared to see the amazing abundance of water which gushes impetuously from the earth, in and near the town;—there is one spring so copious as to turn a mill-wheel. But an examination of the country shows, that although the decided geological features of Cauterets and St. Sauveur are absent at Bagnères, there are three distinct outbreaks of granite adjoining the limestone on which Bagnères is built, and thus these remarkable springs form no exception to the general geological principle, that hot springs rise at the boundary of granite. Professor Forbes states that the Bagnères granite has a peculiar structure, consisting in great proportion of felspar, devoid of mica, and extremely friable. In this respect it greatly resembles the decomposed granites in the west of Cornwall.

We must not, however, forget when discussing the thermal springs of this place, that Bagnères has been frequently visited by earthquakes. Ramond states that no less than sixty-three occurred in one year. The last violent earthquake was felt on the 28th of October, 1835, (the day after the remarkable phenomenon witnessed by M. Philippe, at the Cirque de Tremouse). The shocks were so severe that the inhabitants fled in terror from their houses; noises

like the rolling of thunder among the mountain gorges followed each shock. Furniture was thrown down, and ceilings cracked. How far earthquake phenomena may be connected with hot springs is not known, but we do know that after certain violent earthquakes, the temperature of several springs has experienced a considerable increase.

The height of Bagnères above the sea is 1823 feet, and the temperature of the principal hot springs * in 1835 was as follows:

Le Dauphin	119°
La Reine	114°
Roc de Lanne	115·2°
Source des Yeux	89·4°
St. Roch	109·4°
Foulon	93°

Professor Forbes, to whom I am indebted for this table, expresses a hope that, in consequence of the very solid construction of the baths, buildings will endure for many years; and thus, by enabling future observers to observe the temperature of the springs at the same localities where his thermometers were immersed, comparisons may be

* Here is the tariff of the baths: — Foulon, Yeux, La Rampe, St Roch, 1 fr. 10 cents.; La Reine, Dauphin, Roc Lannes, 1 fr. Le linge se paye à part. Buvette, 5 cents.; bain de pieds, 25 cents. De 11 à 2 heures, les mêmes bains se payent 50 cents.

instituted with the view of ascertaining whether the temperature of the waters undergoes any change in the course of a considerable lapse of time.

The bathing-rooms and marble baths in the "Thermes" are very luxurious and well ordered. All are furnished with hot and cold water, which you can turn on at pleasure; so you can dispense with a tub at Bagnères. But you must book your bath, and when your time for being served is fixed, be punctual to the minute; otherwise you have no chance of obtaining a bath until very late in the afternoon. The "Thermes" possesses all the advantages of a German Kursaal, excepting the very disgraceful "Hell," which, greatly to the credit of the French Government, is no longer a plague-spot at the spas of France. The love for play is great among the French; all day long you see cards and other games played at the French watering-places, but the stakes are rarely high.

The chief *passe-temps*, however, of the visitors in this "abrégé d'une capitale" is the promenade to the Salut Baths, the ferruginous spring near the town, and the shady walks on Mont Olivet at the back of the "Thermes." Excursions abound around Bagnères, and to judge by the costumes of many of the visitors you would suppose that they were as fond of climbing mountains as Englishmen are. Here, according to a

local journal, is the orthodox dress for a gentleman mountaineer during his sojourn at Bagnères: —

"*Costume du fashionable dans ses courses des montagnes.*—Veste légére, bâton ferré, spadrilles à la manière espagnole, ceinture rouge, berret montagnard."

Add to this a variety of wild flowers, trimming, said berret, and meeting an individual in such a dress, would you not come to the conclusion that he had made, or wished you to suppose that he had made, an "ascension?"

On the evening after my arrival at Bagnères, there was a peasant's ball in a large barn-like room on the Salut promenade. All the young men and girls of the town and neighbourhood were present, dressed for the most part in picturesque costumes. The scene was very animated, and though much fun and jollity prevailed, I did not observe a single case of intoxication.

Between the dances, Béarnais ballads were trolled by a couple of musicians, and judging from the enthusiastic reception which they received, they were great favourites. There is a large sale for these ballads throughout the Hautes Pyrénées, and as the reader may be interested to see a specimen, I annex three stanzas from one of the most popular: —

"Mon doux amie s'en ba parti,
S'en ba ta la Rochelle,
Que herey you soulette acy
Oh Milice cruelle.
Que herey you? quem bau mouri
Louen de moun co fidelle.

"Lon plus aymable deüs galans
You l'ey pergut praübette,
Andichat fleus, adii ribans,
Adii douces flourettes;
You baü passa mouns plus bets ans
Chers plases amourettes.

"Gran Diu qui bedet moun turmen,
Que counnechet ma peine;
Het — me rebede soulèmen
L'aubeyet qui m'encadène;
Après sat beye prountamen;
Het mouri Matalène."

When the ball was over, an itinerant pyrotechnist announced his intention of discharging some fireworks. The announcement drew a large crowd round the place of the proposed exhibition. At the appointed time he appeared surrounded by a heap of what seemed to be fireworks, though, as the result showed, they were in all probability as unreal as the wood wares of the Yankee shopkeeper who begins trade on a limited capital.

After an address full of promised brilliancies, in the form of wonderful fireworks, he ignited a few squibs and crackers, and when the last spark was

extinguished, sent a strapping woman round with a hat for contributions. A harvest of sous from expectant peasants resulted, which the fellow pocketed with great coolness; and then informing the crowd that their contributions were quite insufficient to warrant him discharging *les grandes pièces*, packed up his stock in trade, and was soon lost in the darkness. A crowd of English rustics would, I apprehend, under similar circumstances, have handled the professing pyrotechnist rather roughly; the Béarnais peasants sputtered forth a few exclamations and oaths, and dispersed.

The superstitious nature of the population in the south of France is taken advantage of by numerous quack doctors and charlatans, who travel from town to village, and impose on the credulity of the people. I have often been amused by the excellent acting of these gentry, one of whom may be almost always seen in a French country town during a fair. They have, however, degenerated, for the mountebanks are reduced to become their own merry-andrews.

The day before I left Bagnères one of the fraternity set up his travelling establishment in anticipation of a fair which was to be held during the ensuing week. The machine in which he exhibited resembled a huge diligence. The sides were resplendent with gilding

and paint, and within a shield with supporters which would have puzzled even a garter king-at-arms to describe, were emblazoned "Le Docteur Crinaozabo de Paris, le plus célèbre Dentiste de la France." He had no sooner opened his shop than he was surrounded by gaping crowds. Pyramids of carious and fantastically fanged teeth rose before him, and on each side of his stage were piles of bottles, specifics for the most torturing tooth-ache. You would have sworn that he was a martyr to this pain, so eloquently did he describe its writhing agonies. And for half a franc — only fifty centimes — you were promised instantaneous relief. A brisk sale followed. When customers fell off, he offered to extract teeth gratuitously. And it was wonderful to see the alacrity with which the peasants accepted this offer, though sometimes they must have repented their confidence, for judging by the long and strong pulls before the tooth was extracted, the great dentist probably frequently wrenched out a sound and useful member of the peasant's grinders. But his fame seemed to rise precisely in proportion to the tugs he gave, and the screams of the unfortunate peasant; for when the latter, with a shrewd suspicion that he had been deprived of a sound instead of a carious tooth, demanded to see it, the quack produced a

terrible-looking black tusk, with a fang like a tap-root, and assured the peasant and admiring spectators that this was the tooth he had extracted.

Are we to conclude from the fact that the droll quack doctor with his dazzling apparatus, such as may still be seen in France, has disappeared from England, that our country population are wiser than that of France? I fear that this would be a very erroneous conclusion, for although the trumpet of the genuine quack doctor is no longer heard, loud blasts of humbug resound throughout our land; and our peasant is as easily gulled by a thimble-rigger or an advertising charlatan, as the Pyrenean mountaineer is deluded by a Parisian pretender to medical or surgical science.

Bagnères is so well known that I should not be warranted in asking the reader to accompany me in the various sketching excursions that I made around the town. The French rave about the Val Campan, asserting it to be so lovely as only to require a poet to render it as famous as that of Tempé. Ramond declared it to be "*une apparition anticipée du monde futur*," forgetting, however, to say which world. Most beautiful, assuredly, is the scenery which it unfolds; the valley is watered by the infant Adour, which murmurs as it bounds sparklingly over its stony bed,

and the entire district is rich in subjects for the landscape painter.

I hold, however, that the Val l'Esponne is superior to that of Campan, for while the lower portions present a succession of lovely pastoral scenes, wooded glades, and green glens, the upper part above Esponne consists of a grand gorge, lined with precipitous cliffs and scars gaudy with lichens, and streaked with gauze-like cascades.

And then that view of the magnificent Pic de Montaigu, rising at the head of the gorge, clad in light robes of snow, and the great pine forests clothing the lower mountains, and those rock pinnacles—nature's flag-staffs—and the foaming torrent, seen through the leafy network of prodigious beech-trees—place the scenery of the Val l'Esponne far above that of the Val Campan. At least I thought so when, after a long day's wandering in the upper part, I was reluctantly obliged to hasten to the village of Esponne, for shelter from an impending storm. Great rain-drops descended as I rode into the little hamlet, and requested a cottager to allow me to put my pony into his outhouse, and take shelter myself in his room. The occupant was a very old man, who, when he had granted my request, proceeded to inform me, in a *patois* most difficult of

comprehension, that all his family were at the marriage festivities of a relative in the village. The wedding had taken place three days before, but, in accordance with a custom in some districts in the *Hautes Pyrénées,* the rejoicings had been renewed each day, and would be kept up for two days more.

There are no ancient customs more rigidly adhered to by the Béarnais, than those relating to marriage. In the commune of Biros, when a lover desires to propose for a girl, he proceeds to the house of her parents, accompanied by a friend, who carries a present of an *outre* of wine, and who is called "ech compagnoun déra bouto," — companion of the *outre.* Negotiations then follow, the lover making his worldly wealth known to the girl's parents, while they announce their daughter's marriage portion. If these important matters prove satisfactory, the wine is drank, and the young man regarded as affianced to the girl, while, on the other hand, if the wine be untasted, he knows that his suit is rejected.

In other localities the lover proceeds in a very singular manner to bring his courting to a climax; he pinches the fair object of his affections, who, instead of boxing his ears, as English maidens would probably do, sits on his knees, if willing to become his wife, but turns away if resolved not to marry him.

When the marriage-day is fixed, the bride's distaff and spindle, with her portion and presents of household furniture, are carried to her future home, particular reverence being paid to the distaff, always a very important article in the estimation of the Pyrenean peasant-woman, who is constantly twirling the spindle when not occupied by domestic duties.

If the bride has not been previously married, her head is adorned by wild flowers, and she takes particular care, in crossing the threshold of her door, not to touch the sill, as contact with that locality would, it is believed, cause her to lose her influence as mistress of her house. The custom of singing nuptial chants common in Brittany, is also observed in the *Hautes Pyrénées*. This is a frequent burden in their chants: —

"Nobio, pouto la mal sul cap.
Digo: buon tens, oun des anat?
La mal sul cap, loupe sul fours,
Et aig adiou a tous bés jours."

Which may be rendered,—"Young wife, put thy hand on thy head; say, where hast thou been? Thy hand on thy head, thy foot on the hearth, and so farewell to thy days of gaiety." It is curious how much this resembles the song of Breton peasant-brides; who, when they have become a wife, sing at the marriage feast: —

"Farewell, farewell, dear friends of my youth! I have thrown myself away! I have thrown myself away, and exchanged a life of joy for one of pain. Sorrow and grief await me. I am but a servant now, for I am married. Then hasten, O ye who are free to Pardons (religious and profane meetings), and enjoy life while ye may. Farewell, dear friends of my youth, farewell!"

I am afraid that there is great truth in both predictions; for the Pyrenean peasant's wife, as well as the Breton's, is a hard worker, toiling in the fields early and late in all weathers, and soon becoming prematurely old and haggard.

It is also worthy of remark, that the practice of women in Brittany, who repair alone at midnight hours to strangely-shaped stones, hoping by certain rites to become happy mothers, is observed in some districts of the Hautes Pyrénées. At the entrance to the Val d'Aspe, an upright stone, visited by sterile women, and locally known as "The Stone of Sterility," may be seen; and I was informed that other similar stones exist in other places.

We have seen that the Pyrenean bride is taught that married life is not all *couleur de rose;* and it seems that the men do not require the admonition of nuptial chants to be made aware that matrimony involves many cares and anxieties, having a tendency to depress his spirits; for he has a very expressive proverb,—"Maridat lou Gabé, que staré,"—mean-

ing, "If the Gave were married, it would lose its impetuosity and become placid."

But whatever may be the hardships and temptations to which the Pyrenean Benedict and his wife are exposed, once married, they are said to be rarely unfaithful to each other.

CHAP. XIV.

The Palombière.—French Tourists.—A remarkable Man.—French Writers and English Tourists.—A Family Picture.— Description of the Palombière.—The "Trépied."—Practice versus Theory.—The Crow's Nest.—Migratory Birds.—The Columba Palumbis.—The Wood Pigeon.—Rapid Incubation.— Domestic Pigeons. —Their Animal Economy.—Pigeon's Curd.—The Carrier Pigeon.—How the Pigeons are caught.—Produce of the Palombière. —Value of the Pigeons.

You are sure to be asked at Bagnères whether you have been to the Palombière, and if you answer in the negative, you are equally sure to be pressed to visit it. The Palombière is, indeed, one of the chief places of resort by the Bagnères visitors towards the end of the season; and that you may have some idea of the estimation in which it is held, hear what a local guide-book says:—"Rien de plus agréable à voir que la chasse qu'on fait aux colombes; c'est un plaisir qu'on se refuse rarement. Un air vif et pur, de jolis sites, une marche qui ouvre l'appétit, et pour le satisfaire, de beaux pigeons que l'on achète presque pour rien."

After this, who would not visit the Palombière?

It is situated on the ridge of a hill, about two miles from Bagnères, and, apart from the interest of the bird-catching apparatus, the views from the eminence are among the finest near the town. On my way to the place I overtook a party of French ladies and gentlemen, who, judging from the remarks heard as I passed, were tourists, but, by their mode of travelling, of the sedentary class; for all, with one exception, were mounted on donkeys. These animals, by the way, may be hired at Bagnères; but are only patronised by very timid ladies of a certain age and children. The exceptional case was a gentleman prodigiously fat, who was borne in a *chaise à porteur* by four men;—indeed, I question whether a donkey could have been found to carry him; for, though your well-fed donkey is a strong beast, there are limits to his powers of endurance. The fat tourist might have hired a sturdy pony up to his weight, but perhaps riding was attended with nameless inconveniences, and walking was evidently quite out of the question; for when nature or good living had blown him out, the operation did not extend beyond his body, the distending force seemingly not being sufficient to penetrate to his hands and feet, which were so small as to be out of all proportion to his huge bloated body, and quite unfit for locomotive purposes.

You have, doubtless, seen an individual of this description, though not, perhaps, on a blazing hot day in the south of France, borne by men in a chair. I hope that they stipulated to be paid double fare; and even at this rate their remuneration would be hardly earned.

French writers are apt to make fun of English tourists, and would have their countrymen believe that the British nation always cuts a very ridiculous figure abroad. Here is a picture, for example, not very flattering to our vanity: the writer is in the Pyrenees, and meets "un gros bonhomme tout rond, qui nous régarde d'un air paterne, et lit son journal; trois dames d'un âge mûr, très-élancées, très-maigres, très-roides, qui, par dignité, mettent leurs bêtes au trot dès que nous nous approchons d'elles.

"Le cavalier servant est un gentilhomme osseux et cartilagineux, fiché perpendiculairement sur sa selle, comme un poteau de télégraphe. Nous entendons un gloussement aigre, comme d'une poule étranglée, et nous reconnaissons la langue anglaise."

Ah, well! be not vexed, venerable British Paterfamilias, with thy handsome daughters; for are they not the beauties so highly lauded by the very writers who poke their fun at us? And I should like to know, though you may be "un bonhomme tout

rond," did you ever require four men to carry you up the mountains?

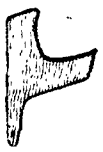
The precise locality of the "Chasse," as it is called, — but improperly, as instead of the fowler going in search of the birds, they, poor things, fly into his snare — is between tall trees standing on the summit of the hill which I have mentioned. The spaces between these trees is occupied by nets extending from within a few feet of their tops to three feet of the ground. About one hundred feet in front of the nets, and on the side from whence the birds approach, a singular construction is erected called a *trépied*, an erroneous name, for the apparatus stands on only two legs. If you were to desire an engineer to construct an apparatus which should combine the requisites of being 150 feet high, and capable of sustaining a man at that height with perfect safety, he would, in all probability, erect a cumbrous and expensive scaffolding, or perhaps an even more expensive tower. The Pyrenean peasant, ignoring all the principles of mechanical science, goes to work in a very simpl manner. His *trépied* consists of poles spliced together so as to form two mast-like erections about 150 feet high. One mast is nearly vertical, the other slightly curved; the thick ends are embedded in the ground about five feet from each other, and the smaller ends

meet at the top, and sustain a kind of "crow's nest," consisting of a basket sufficiently large to contain a man. The great height and apparent fragility of these masts constitute the wonder of the whole affair, and looking up at the delicately suspended basket, you marvel how it can stand against a puff of wind even, while a storm, you would imagine, would sweep away the whole apparatus. But these thin tall masts have never given way, from the circumstance that they bend but do not snap before the strong blast. And it is a curious fact that whereas three masts were formerly used, from the belief that their supports were necessary for the safety of a man perched at the giddy height of 150 feet, with nothing between him and the ground but thin poles, two are now found to answer every purpose, and accordingly the third mast is dispensed with.

Access to the "crow's nest" is gained by means of pegs inserted in the curved mast at intervals of two feet, and up these a lad goes with as much coolness as if he were ascending an ordinary ladder. I saw a youth mount while the *trépied* was swaying to and fro in a very alarming manner, but he did not appear to be in any way affected by the motion. Accidents rarely happen, and according to my informant, who was proprietor of one of the *trépieds*,

when they do occur they are almost always the result of great carelessness.

The man or youth appointed to keep watch in the aerial basket, is provided with pieces of wood shaped in this fashion, but eight times larger than the sketch.



Let us suppose him perched aloft with one of these pieces of wood in his hands, and while he is watching we will say a few words about the pigeons.

Many migratory birds pass over the Pyrenees in the autumn on their way to warm countries, but the particular bird for which the nets are set at the Palombière, is the *Columba palumbis*, the ramier of France and wood pigeon of England. This bird arrives in France in great flocks at the beginning of spring, and pairs soon after arriving. The process of incubation is so quick, that in fourteen days after the eggs are laid, the young birds are able to fly. Buffon states that he has frequently seen young ramiers in France at the commencement of April; that the period of hatching does not extend beyond ten days, and that the number of eggs rarely exceeds three. Two broods at least, are brought up during the spring and summer, but this is much below the average fecundity of the Columbidæ tribe. A pair of

domesticated pigeons may, according to good authority, be the progenitors of 14,760 young birds in four years; and any one who has had an opportunity of seeing and studying the habits of domesticated pigeons, is well aware of the extraordinary and never failing wealth of a dovecote, and how often pigeons do duty at a dinner table in the country, when unexpected friends arrive to share the family repast. We know too, how fond our city mechanics and weavers are of keeping pigeons, and how the birds return to their little sooty homes on the house tops, through the dense smoke of our metropolis. During the last seventy years pigeons have bred about Somerset House without any provision having been made for them, beyond an occasional feeding during severe weather.

The short interval between the hatching of a young pigeon, and its being able to fly and become a parent, is doubtless due to the beautiful contrivance discovered by the eminent John Hunter, by means of which the newly hatched pigeon is provided with nourishment, highly calculated to give it strength. We have all heard of the joke of sending a child to buy "pigeon's milk," but the mission is not after all so fabulous, for the adult pigeon does secrete a kind of milky curd with which the young are

fed. The secretion takes place in the stomach, and for the first few days of feeding the parent bird throws up a pure curd, but as the young gain strength the curd is seen to be mixed with the ordinary food of the pigeon, the proportion of curd diminishing as the young pigeons become better able to provide for themselves.

Thus is the numerous pigeon tribe kept up in undiminished numbers, and when we reflect on the multitudes annually destroyed in Europe, it is evident that their places can only be supplied by extraordinary fecundity.

But although the wood pigeon is the largest species of the genus to which it belongs, and exceedingly prolific, all attempts to induce it to breed in confinement have failed. A pair in the Zoological Society's dove-house, did indeed build a nest and produce two eggs, but during hatching, the eggs, as it was supposed, were broken by other pigeons confined in the same cage.

The migratory flight of wood pigeons is wonderfully constant to certain periods of the year. In the Pyrenees they make their appearance about the middle of September, and continue to pass the mountains until the end of October, after which month they are not seen. Weather seems to have no in-

fluence upon them, for they have the habit of the carrier pigeon, whose flight be it fair or foul is truly set forth in the lines —

> "It blew, and it rain'd,
> The pigeon disdain'd
> To seek shelter, — undaunted he flew;
> Till wet was his wing,
> And painful the string,
> So heavy the letter it grew."

In alluding to the indifference of the pigeon to weather, I mean when once it has taken flight. In other respects the wood pigeon is greatly influenced by meteorological changes. The bird which leaves France and crosses the Pyrenees on its way to the Atlas mountains in Africa, is the same as our wood pigeon, which remains with us throughout the year; but it does so because our climate is considerably milder than that of France during the winter, and while the wood pigeon has great difficulty in obtaining food during the winter months in that country, it finds abundance of nourishment in our fields, as it feeds upon all kinds of grain, and the seeds and leaves of a great variety of plants.

I had not the good fortune to see a flight of ramiers, for although the *trépieds* and nets were set up, no birds had passed when I visited the Palom-

bière. This, however, is the manner of proceeding. All persons except the crow's nest man conceal themselves carefully behind leafy screens; and from early dawn to dusk a keen look out is kept for the expected visitants. When a flock of ramiers is seen on the horizon, the watcher gives notice, and when the pigeons heading the flock are within about a hundred yards of him, he throws the piece of wood at them figured on page 225. Whether they imagine it to be a bird of prey, to which, by the way, it bears some resemblance when whirling through the air, or not, I cannot say, but the result is that the flock dip, and not being so lucky as the Argonautic doves, which flew so fast and strong between the treacherous and dangerous Symplegades rocks as only to lose the end of their tails, forfeit their lives in their endeavour to pass between the trees. For the nets are so cunningly set, that when the pigeons strike against them they fall, being liberated by the pulling of a trigger, and enclose the poor birds within the meshes. Death rapidly follows, the work of destruction being performed by old women, who mercilessly kill the pigeons by biting their necks.

In this manner from two hundred to three hundred pigeons are frequently captured and killed in a few minutes. Success, however, is very uncertain,

for the proprietor of one of the *trépieds* informed me that many days pass during which not a single pigeon is seen.

The Palombière is the property of the Commune of Géras, and is rented by eight parties, who have distinct "chasse" grounds, where they erect their *trépieds* and nets. The rent varies from 1000 to 2000 francs per annum, and the pigeons realise from five to ten sous each.

CHAP. XV.

Advantages of Bagnères de Bigorre. — Across the Mountains to Luchon.—Asto.—Pitton de Tournefort.— Perils of a Botanist.— The Quarries of Espiadet. — St. Marie.—Hackling Flax.—Large Boulder.—Palliole.—Dense Pine Forest.— Lichens.—Hourquette d'Aspin. — Magnificent Prospect. — Complicated Zigzags. — Wood Avalanches.—Large Flocks of Sheep.—Shepherd Life.— The Val d'Aure.—Sarrat de la Croix.—A disappointing Hotel.— Spanish Muleteers.—Oily Food.—The Templars.—The Counts d'Armagnac.—Jean V.—Vielle.—Caudeat.—Tramesaigues.—The Mountains of Azet and Arbizan.—A Primitive Tavern.—Drinking from a Goat Skin.—Izzard Hunter.—The Izzard of Hotels.— Habits of Izzards.

BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE is in my opinion one of those rare places where first impressions are strengthened by closer acquaintance. I cannot say what its climatology may be compared with that of Pau, but I consider it to be a far more desirable residence than Pau, and it has the advantage, at present, of being suitable to moderate incomes.

Gladly would I have prolonged my sojourn in the clean little town, but August was fast waning, and I had many mountains to cross before the fine weather

disappeared. The tourist intending to go from Bagnères de Bigorre to Luchon has two courses open to him. He can take the diligence, which makes a long détour to avoid the mountains, or he can cross them on horseback, or foot in one long day, or, better still, divide the journey by sleeping at Arreau. I decided on the latter course; and, with this view, packed a few necessary articles of dress in a small bag; diligences enable you to send your heavy luggage by them to Bagnères de Luchon or to Toulouse; and as I proposed visiting this city, I forwarded my portmanteau to it, and then went in search of a strong pony. After a long hunt I secured an animal, whose sparkling eyes and unblemished knees gave promise that he would pick his way well among the rocks, and not make me suddenly acquainted with their hardness. These and other preliminaries having been arranged, I left Bagnères early in the morning. The weather was very propitious. The sun lighted the mountain peaks, while the green glittering vale of Campan was still bathed in dew, and the air fresh and bracing. I halted a few minutes in the pretty little village of Aste, to look at the house where the eminent botanist Tournefort resided while botanising in this part of the Pyrenees. The memory of the zealous and enterprising savant is preserved by the

following inscription, set over the door of the house: —

> "Pitton de Tournefort dans cet humble réduit
> Des fatigues du jour, se reposait la nuit;
> Quand explorant nos monts qu'on ignorait encore,
> Ce grand homme tressait la couronne de Flore."

Tournefort lived in the latter part of the seventeenth century, when travelling in the Pyrenees was beset with difficulties. On one occasion, while botanising in the Eastern Pyrenees, near Catalonia, he was observed by brigands, who imagined, from the numerous cases that he carried, that he was worth plundering. Accordingly, they tracked him to the cabin where he spent the night; but, having heard of the existence of these gentry, Tournefort had concealed his money in a very black and hard loaf of rye bread. His botanical cases were rifled, but their contents possessed no value in the estimation of the brigands, and they fed far too well to make free with the repulsive-looking loaf. On another occasion, the cabin in which he was sleeping was overwhelmed by an avalanche, under which he was buried for many hours; but his love for his favourite pursuit caused him to think very lightly of these mishaps, and the honours paid to him on his return to Paris testified how highly his labours were valued.

The Val Campan has long yielded a variety of beautiful marbles extensively used for architectural and domestic purposes. The quarries of Espiadet furnished material for the exquisite lapidary decorations of the Trianon, and princely Chatsworth is adorned with many handsome ornaments made from the Campan marble. Great quantities are still quarried and worked at the Marbrerie of M. Geruzet. The works and their produce are shown to strangers, a wise measure on the part of the proprietor, who knows that few English tourists can resist the temptation of purchasing a souvenir of his establishment. You are reminded that payment in the form of ready money is unnecessary. M. Geruzet is a banker, and will have great pleasure in honouring your drafts, provided you have a letter of credit.

As I emerged from the village of St. Marie, eight miles from Bagnères, I was startled by a loud clacking noise proceeding from a dell in which were some fifty women, hackling flax. This work is always performed in the Pyrenees by women. They select a shady spot by the side of a stream, and hackle from morning till night with an incessant accompaniment of singing and talking. About four miles beyond St. Marie the stream crosses a very romantic wood bridge. Near this bridge and close to the Gave, lies

a huge granite rock, which I think must be one of the largest boulders in the Pyrenees. I dismounted and measured it, and found the length to be eighty-seven feet, breadth from twenty to forty-eight, and height about forty feet. In the absence of any impending mountain from whence this enormous mass might have fallen, I came to the conclusion that it had been transferred to its present situation by the agency of ice. I could not, however, detect any grooves or scratches on it or on the neighbouring rocks.

I reached Palliole, a group of cottages in the midst of green pastures, at half-past nine. Farewell now to even ways: for soon after passing this village you plunge into a dark pine forest, through which the road is carried over a continuous ascent. With the exception of squirrels which crossed my path every moment, carrying their tails high in the air, I saw no living thing. The silence was oppressive, broken only at rare intervals by the scream of some bird of prey, or the fainter cry of its victim. On the summit skirts of this forest through which I rode for two hours, are groups of blasted pines apparently struck by lightning. Their spectre-like branches are festooned by the trailing *Usnea dichotoma* generally supposed to be a moss, but which is really a lichen, possessing all the clinging properties of the *Verru-*

caria pétræ, which makes map-like figures on rocks.

Half a mile from the summit of the Hourquette d'Aspin I emerged from the forest, and had scarcely ceased admiring the grand outline of mountains behind me when a new world of billowy forms appeared in front, bounded by the snowy tops of the Maladetta. Some minutes elapsed before I could take in the magnificent panorama, justly held to be one of the finest in the Pyrenees. The combination of peaks, ridges, domes, and valleys is exceedingly grand. In the foreground are broad slopes, covered with pines near their summits, intersected here and there by cascades,—never-failing features in all Pyrenean scenery. I could have remained here for hours; but fleeting time warned me to continue my journey, so I commenced descending the Col to Arreau, which seemed within half an hour's ride; indeed, I fully calculated on sharing the travellers' midday meal in the little inn, so close did it seem. I was, however, soon undeceived; for the slope of the mountain is so steep that the descent can only be effected by a series of complicated zigzags of the most perplexing nature. Many times, when I thought that I was close to the town, the road turned to the right or left, running nearly to the head of the valley,

and I found myself nearly as far from Arreau in a straight line as ever. I heard afterwards that a path descends in a more direct line from the top of the Col to Arreau, but it is very difficult to find, and rather dangerous for horses; as it was, I jogged on, drawing largely on my patience at every turn of the road. Within a short distance of the summit, I observed peasants launching huge bundles of firewood down the sides of the mountain, where they were destitute of trees. Once set in motion, they went plunging down to the valley; and as often as I passed along that part of the road which crossed the course of these wood avalanches, I was obliged to keep a sharp look-out above. Generally the rattling masses cleared the road at a leap, flying over me and bounding onwards, but occasionally a bundle would come whack upon the path, and lie there until helped further on its travels. I came to the conclusion that this mountain-road cannot be much travelled, otherwise a stop would be put to this dangerous mode of expediting firewood, a bundle of which, coming in contact with man or beast, would most assuredly prove no light matter;—and I was right; for on inquiry at Arreau, I was informed that the pass is rarely used, excepting by muleteers and shepherds. I did not meet any mules, fortunately perhaps for

myself; but I saw numerous flocks of sheep on the lower mountain slopes,—well-fed, rich, fleecy animals, wearing deep sonorous bells round their necks. Besides the attendant shepherd, every flock had its guardian-dog,—magnificent monsters of the true Pyrenean breed, bold as a lion, and vigilant as the wolves in the surrounding forests; and at some distance from the flocks were superb goats, the locomotive dairies of the shepherds and dogs. No cows are to be seen here; we are too much among the wilds of the Pyrenees to find these animals. The shepherds on the mountains between Bagnères de Bigorre and Luchon are divided into four classes: the head shepherd, who has the superintendence of an entire district, and three grades of subordinates, who rise according to seniority. The head shepherd, or mayoral, as he is called, has generally 10,000 sheep in his district, and fifty shepherds, with the same number of dogs. Each shepherd has a yearly wage of twenty francs, and a daily allowance of two pounds of bread. In this respect dog and man fare alike, two pounds of bread being also the daily portion of each dog; but I apprehend, from what I heard, that the drink of the latter is more frequently water than milk.

Such, ye sentimental, love-sick youths, who fancy

that piping on the mountain-brow to a Rosalind while flocks are feeding must be perfect bliss, is the life of the Pyrenean shepherd. He is not, however, without his Rosalind, being generally married. The wife does the domestic duties of his mountain hut;—but there let us leave her, for she is not lovely to behold,—Rosalinds as well as Corydons looking better on paper than in the flesh.

At length I doubled the last turn, and found myself, greatly to my satisfaction, fairly in the Val d'Aure, on a good road, which from its straight, honest appearance promised to play no labyrinthine tricks, but to lead direct to Arreau. In twenty minutes I passed under the Sarrat de la Croix, a fantastic rock, somewhat like a contorted octagon tower, which is regarded by the peasants with considerable superstition, and soon saw the sign-board of the Hotel de France swinging aloft in the main street. But any notions that I may have had respecting hotel comforts were quickly dispelled when, after seeing my pony fed, I was shown into a room dignified by the name of salon, but which was no better than an imperfectly cleaned pig-sty. The dirt lay in fat black cakes on the floor; and the process of caking was illustrated by a girl coming in with a can full of water, which she poured on the filthy

boards, in order, as she said, to lay the dust. Dogs of every variety, from the noble Pyrenean to the base cur, were lying about; and a beggar, shrouded in a trembling heap of rags, stood at the door, muttering aves as fast as his lips could move.

Round a table in the kitchen were a party of Spanish muleteers and French peasants, busily engaged devouring a most savoury mess redolent of garlic, and other Spaniards were driving a clamorous bargain round the fire, respecting the purchase of French mules. The scene was very stirring, but not satisfactory, for it was evident that my visions of a dinner were not likely to be realised. There was no meat in the house, but that floating in a sea of oil to which the party in the kitchen were paying attention. I vainly tried to eat the mess; there were some eggs, however, so with them, indifferent bread and goat's milk, I managed to make a kind of second breakfast, being in some manner comforted by the assurance that I should have a fowl for supper. It is never wise to pry into the secrets of a landlord's larder, but I had little doubt that the realisation of the host's promise would have the effect of depriving a cock, who had the run of the kitchen, of one of his wives, a loss which, judging by his slenderly stocked harem, he could ill afford.

I had a long afternoon before me, and as my pony was perfectly fresh I determined to explore the Val d'Aure as far as Tramesaigues, returning to Arreau to sleep. The path practicable for horses lies through the country of the Templars, and the excursion is most charming.

On the dissolution of the Templars, the Val d'Aure became the property of the celebrated Counts d'Armagnac, whose history abounds with the most startling and extraordinary incidents. They were perpetually at war with the Counts of Foix, and rebellious to the kings of France. The villany of the race seems to have culminated in the person of Jean V., the last count, who built a castle a short distance from Arreau, now a total ruin. This count was born in 1420, and was familiar with scenes of rapine and blood from his infancy. His grandfather Bernard VIII., high constable of France, was so abhorred on account of his excessive cruelty that when he was slaughtered in the Jacquerie massacre, a broad sash in the form of that worn as the badge of the triumphant faction was cut from his skin and hung about his corpse.

The grandson, however, far surpassed Count Bernard in iniquity. He seduced his young and beautiful sister Isabella, and married her by a dispensation

purporting to have been given to him by the Pope, but which had been forged for him by two priests. The Pope excommunicated him, and his sovereign, Charles VII. endeavoured to wean him from his guilty passion. Vainly, however, for he defied alike kingly and ecclesiastical power, and took arms against the King. When he could no longer hold out, he made a journey to Rome to obtain the Pope's pardon and protection. These were granted, and, on the death of Charles VII., the count obtained the restoration of his dominions from Louis XI. This clemency had, however, no other effect than increasing the count's ingratitude and villany. His sister being still alive, he married another woman, behaved in the most treacherous manner to his sovereign and country, engaged in numerous rebellious enterprises, was condemned to death by the Parliament, and at last killed by the king's soldiers in an attack made on his town of St. Bazielle, while he was in the act of receiving the Communion. In such detestation was his race held that they were all exterminated, and when the guilty Isabella, whose life had been saved by her nephew Gaston of Lyons, gave the Count her brother's possessions in the Val d'Aure, the inhabitants would not tolerate him, and the dominions of the Armagnacs were annexed to the French crown.

It would indeed be difficult to find a villain of deeper dye than this last Count of Armagnac, whose name for many years struck terror throughout the Pyrenees. As I have said, his stronghold near Arreau has crumbled to entire ruin, but you will be rewarded by climbing to the site for the sake of the view of the Val d'Aure.

My ride from Arreau to Vielle (four and a half miles), and walk from thence to Tramesaigues, about three miles, introduced me to a succession of magnificent scenery. You pass through the small hamlets of Caudeat, where there are a few hot springs, Ancisen, and Guichen, formerly occupied by the Knights Templars, and still more Spanish than French in appearance. Quaint little churches, said to have been built by that body, yet remain bearing sculptural relics of the order. That at Tramesaigues is extremely curious and interesting, and has every appearance of having been a genuine Templar church.

The grand features of this excursion, however, are the glorious peaks of Azet and Arbizon, which rise like Titanic watch-towers on the east and left of the valley. These mountains are 9537 and 9285 feet high. In a more northern latitude they would be snow-robed and girdled with glaciers, but here snow

during the summer months only streaks their lofty cones.

Were Tramesaigues more accessible, it would be a second Cauterets, for the scenery around it is far more remarkable than that in which Cauterets is set, and copious sulphurous springs issue close to the little hamlet, as usual at the junction of the granite and limestone. The waters are used by a few Spaniards, whose country is only an hour's walk from the village. I never saw a group of wilder fellows than those who gathered round me at a little auberge, kept by the custom-house officer.

In answer to my inquiry whether I could have some wine,—Douaniers, on the Spanish frontier, generally do a little quiet trade in wine and brandy —I was led into a small room made to serve various purposes, and being shown a partly distended goat-skin hanging from the wall, was desired to help myself. The manner of doing this was to elevate the end of the wine-bag, pull out a peg closing an orifice at the termination of one of the goat's legs, and allow the liquid to gurgle down one's throat. But my essay was a sad failure, for when I tilted the skin up, and adjusted my mouth in such a manner as I imagined to receive the wine in a gently flowing stream, it spouted forth like a torrent, and nearly

choked me. My failure, of course, created much merriment among the Spaniards, who are adepts at drinking out of goat-skins. One showed me how the feat was accomplished, dexterously guiding a thin vinous stream down his throat; but although he took great pains to make me master of the art, I succeeded very imperfectly. It requires considerable practice, and if you are a novice and thirst for a drink, you will do well, in the absence of a bowl, to get the landlord to administer the wine to you in the same manner that Don Quixote was served.

On my way back, I fell in with an izzard hunter, returning from a successful hunt, for he had an izzard on his shoulders which he had shot near the summit of the Pic Azet. He could talk a little decent French, though much mixed with *patois*, and as we journeyed down the valley I gleaned some information from him. He had been out two days, having been tempted to pass the night on the mountains, in consequence of his having seen an unusually large herd of izzards, numbering, as he declared, at least thirty. But with all his skill, and he was a veteran hunter, he had not been able to get more than one shot at them. Every year the izzards were becoming wilder. On my observing that this did not seem to have any effect on the supply at hotels, which

appeared very abundant, he laughed heartily, and exclaimed, that what was generally put before strangers as izzard was really goat's flesh, and when I remembered the disguised manner in which so-called izzard frequently appears at tables-d'hôte, I think it very likely that a juicy well-fed goat is often made to do duty as an izzard. Living goats have mystified the French; for we read, that some cunning Swiss took several of these large half wild animals to Paris many years ago, when we must presume zoology was less known than it is at present, and passed them off upon naturalists as ibexes.

The hunter stated that izzards were still abundant on the Spanish side of the mountains, where they are but little pursued. He was not aware that any attempt had been made to preserve them in the Pyrenees, in the same manner that chamois are preserved in Switzerland. In the canton Glarus a large tract of mountain has been preserved for more than a century, and chamois are consequently comparatively abundant; and the estate of a friend of mine, in the Vorarlberg, which when he acquired it scarcely contained a dozen chamois, now, in consequence of careful and judicious preserving, abounds with game. When I visited him a few years ago, his *Jager* told me that he could always shoot a chamois when game was

wanted for the table. I fear from what the hunter said that no mercy is shown to young izzards, which, like their young Swiss brethren, are shot before they are half grown. They are able to follow their dam a few hours after they are born, but do not attain their perfect growth until they are two years old. The animal which he had shot was, he said, full grown, and weighed probably about forty pounds. If this was the case, and the animal was a fair specimen, the Pyrenean izzard certainly is, as Ramond states, smaller than the chamois, which frequently weighs sixty pounds. One, a famous beast in the canton Glarus, which had long eluded the hunters, but was at length shot by a veteran sportsman, weighed one hundred and twenty-five pounds. In answer to my question, the hunter told me that he purposed sending his youngest brother with the izzard early in the morning to Bagnères, and that he expected to sell it for ten francs, exclusive of the skin, for which he would obtain one or perhaps two francs. Poor remuneration this for two long days among the mountains; but the Pyrenean izzard hunter has as great a passion for his sport as his Alpine brother hunter, who expects to die in pursuit of his favourite game. There was a chamois hunter who had lost a leg by one of his numerous hunting accidents, and

who contrived to climb the mountains and kill a chamois when provided with a wooden substitute, and my hunter companion told me that he had on one occasion remained out six days and nights, being unwilling to return home without making what sportsmen call a large bag.

Izzards, like goats, are passionately fond of salt, and advantage is taken of this to lure them to places strewed with lumps of rock-salt; but when they are tempted to taste the delicacy, the sentinel invariably keeps a sharp look-out, having apparently an intuitive idea of danger. It is a beautiful sight to see a sentinel izzard give the alarm, by a shrill whistle to the feeding herd, which bound away amidst the mountain peaks, and are out of sight in a moment.

I parted from the hunter at Caudeat, where he lived, and arrived at Arreau as the evening closed. The landlord redeemed his promise, and bearing in mind that my fowl had been but very recently killed, it did justice to the cook; but the Pyrenean mountain air is a great provocative of hunger, and I had ridden many miles since I left Bagnères.

CHAP. XVI.

Insect Phlebotomy.—Curran and the Fleas.—A Change in the Weather.—Val Louron.—Colour in the Pyrenees.—Avejan.—Sources of the Garonne.—Pic de Génos.—Val Gistau.—Pont de la Pez.—Loudervielle.—Val d'Asto.—A Mountain Storm.—Lac Séculéjo.—A Wild Scene.—St. Aventin.—Lose the Way.—A fortunate Meeting.—A Mountain Priest.—Cazeau.—Luchon.—The Landlord's Clothes.—Abusive Frenchmen.

If you are thin-skinned, avoid sleeping at Arreau. I apprehended, from the state of the floors, that I should have to share my bed with many insects which would exact heavy blood-tax, and so it proved. The night reminded me of Curran, who after a long nocturnal battle with legions of strong active fleas, declared to the landlady, who stoutly denied their existence in her house, that had they been unanimous in their motions, they would have pulled him out of bed. Long before dawn I was awake, listening to the gusty wind which shook the little window panes in a very angry manner. The preceding evening had not given promise of a fine day, and when I rose, I saw at a glance that my good fortune respecting fine weather had departed for the

present. The mountains were hung with wreaths of thick mist, and billowy masses of vapour came surging through the Val d'Aure, blotting out every buttress and scar.

Hoping but scarcely expecting that it would clear up, I postponed my departure until eight o'clock, when, there being no prospect of any improvement, I started for Luchon, being persuaded that riding in rain was preferable to spending the day in the Hôtel de France.

When out of the village, I began, like Gil Blas, to count my money; not that I imagined my purse had been rifled, but the inn-keeper had given the change due to me in such a variety of ancient and much-worn coins, that it would have puzzled a clever numismatist to have described them. "Tenez, Monsieur," said he, "vous les avez de toutes espèces;" and true enough they were of all reigns, republics, and sizes. He had, however, dealt fairly by me, and it was not his fault that the coins were not of the newest. Bright napoleons and five-franc pieces do not find their way every day to Arreau.

Shortly after leaving the hamlet, I entered the beautiful Val Louron, which is studded with ruined castles perched on picturesque crags. They formerly rendered good service in defending the passage to

Spain, and harmonise well with the old villages which they still seem to guard. Nowhere in the Pyrenees have I seen such brilliant rock-colouring as in this valley. The rain had deepened all the hues, imparting a more vivid green to the bossy mosses, flushing the gaudy lichens and tinging the exquisite *Valeriana dioica, Parnessia palustris,* and other moisture-loving plants, with unwonted radiance. Passing amidst these glowing colours, I could not help thinking how vapid are all representations of the Pyrenees when colour is discarded. Photography makes you acquainted with the outline of the peaks, the swelling domes, the folds of the hills, and the curves of the valleys; but how short of the glowing reality are those monotonously brown pictures! Nature, everywhere adorned with harmonious hues, is gorgeously arrayed in the Pyrenees, and scenes of beauty in those mountains can never be adequately and truthfully represented without colour.

At Avejan, where there is a very picturesque church, the road crosses to the right bank of the river, flowing down the Val Louron. This stream joins that watering the Val d'Aure, and the two rivers are among the principal feeders of the Garonne, though only separated by the Hourquette d'Aspin from the Adour.

Here I was advised to leave the road, and take a bridle path conducting more directly to Loudervielle. The counsel, however, turned out to be better in theory than in practice, as the path was now a mere watercourse, filling rapidly, for the rain was falling fast. Fortunately I learned the names of the hamlets through which I had to pass, though I found it extremely difficult to make the peasants understand my questions, and to comprehend their *patois*. Many of these hamlets are built in extraordinary localities, appearing to be hooked to the crags, from which a slight push would seemingly detach them. As I ascended, the mists rose a little, allowing me to catch occasional glimpses of glacier-ribb'd mountains, crowned by the grand Pic de Génos.

The Val Louron terminates in the Ports de Clarbide, and de la Pez, through, or rather over which, are passes into the Spanish valley of Gistau. This valley is clothed with pines, which led some enterprising Frenchmen, many years ago, to attempt cutting a tunnel in the mountain, beneath the Port de la Pez, for the purpose of getting conveniently at the trees. The labour proved, however, harder than they imagined, and when they had tunnelled about two hundred feet, they abandoned the undertaking. Little did they think that they may not,

after all, have laboured in vain, for at some future day railways may be carried over the Pyrenean passes into Spain, by means of inclines similar to those existing on the Alleghanies, in which case the boring of La Pez may be made available.

On arriving at Loudervielle, the weather had improved so much, that I resolved on riding to Luchon through the Val d'Asto, in order to visit the Lac d'Oo, or Séculégo. The way to this wild mountain lake lies along a rocky path, carried through the Val d'Arboust, leading to the Val d'Asto. Having given my pony a feed at Loudervielle, I renewed my ride, but had not proceeded far, when I heard a distant growlery among the mountains, and on looking up, saw heavy clouds coming from the west. I pushed on, however, passing through a dark pine forest which groaned as the storm-blast swept through the trees, and up the side of a mountain along which the path is carried in a very unsubstantial manner. The Val d'Asto contracts at its upper end to a mere gorge, lined with frowning precipices, now rendered more gloomy by the impending storm which burst over me. In a few minutes the rivulets became streams, the cascades, rushing cataracts. The tempest increased every moment, the thunder rattled from peak to peak, the dark clouds

were rent by forked lightning, the howling wind blew from every point of the compass, and I was amidst the tumult of a terrific mountain storm. To shelter was impossible, as I was on a path with a precipice on one side, and beetling cliffs on the other, so I pushed on for the lake, now not far distant, where I was told I should find a cabin. Presently I saw the lofty waterfall, 800 feet high, streaming down the precipice into the lake, but all the surrounding features were dim and indistinct. I could see, however, that the situation of Lac Séculéjo is very singular, being formed by a curious natural wall, stretching across the upper part of the valley which acts as a dam, and encloses the water flowing down from the precipices surrounding the lake on three sides.

So blinding was the rain that I had some difficulty in finding the little cabin which in fine weather is only used for purposes of refreshment for man and beast; but where you can get a shake-down for the night on an emergency. A wild-looking fellow conducted my pony into an adjoining shed, while his wife prepared a little refreshment for me, warm wine and sugar forming a principal feature. Great was their surprise at my having ventured alone on such a day to see the lake, but they were even more astonished when I told them I intended going to

Luchon that evening. The man assured me that the weather would not moderate, and that as no rain had fallen for a long time, it was not at all probable that it would cease for some days. This was not a very cheering prophecy, but I was already so moist, that I deemed it better to push on to Luchon than remain at this dreary half-way house. I greatly regretted that I could not climb to the Lac d'Espingo above Lac de Séculéjo, which may be done in about an hour by an active cragsman. I had allowed myself time for this undertaking, but the weather rendered it wholly impracticable. So when I had drunk my hot wine, which was very good, I stood at the door of the hut, looking at the warring elements, and deriving consolation by thinking that the roaring tempest, foaming water, bounding cataracts, and boiling mists were more in keeping with the lake and its wild setting than calm air and a deep blue sky. I gazed for more than an hour on the scene, and then finding that although the thunder had ceased, the rain showed no sign of abating, I mounted again, despite the strong remonstrances of the peasant and his wife, and went down the mountain. In fine weather you can ride from Lac Séculéjo to Luchon in about three hours, and as it was a little after two when I started, I calculated on arriving

at my destination between five and six. The storm raged, if possible, with greater fury than ever, and I had soon practical experience that even Cording's waterproofs, which I take to be the best, may fail to keep the rain out. In vain did I wrap mine round me, the blast blew it over my head, and the water, gathering in the folds, fell down my neck in miniature cataracts. Thus baffled in my attempts to keep myself dry, I endeavoured to protect my bag, that I might have a dry change of clothes when I reached Luchon; but this also proved a failure. Meanwhile I rode on in perplexity and gloom, trusting more to my pony for keeping the path, than to my own vision, for I could scarcely distinguish objects three yards off.

I reached the small village of St. Aventin in an hour and a half, and here I was at considerable pains to obtain information respecting the path to Cazeau; understanding that the most difficult part of the route lay between these villages. My appearance brought every one to their door, all staring at the storm-beaten traveller who was now a locomotive waterfall, for my boots were completely water-logged, and the rain ran from my feet in two tiny streams.

Such was my condition, when, having proceeded about three quarters of a mile beyond St. Aventin, I

was not a little disconcerted on finding that my pony was off the path, at least, there was no sign of a track where he was walking, and I therefore thought it advisable to back my judgment against his instinct. For the guide-book says, that the path between St. Aventin and Cazeau is narrow, and winds along the edges of precipices without the protection of a parapet. Turning back, I peered through the darkness for the lost track, and after long groping, found what I supposed to be the path. Having followed it for some time, I was surprised to find that I was ascending, instead of going down the mountain. How long I should have gone on, or where the track would have led me, I cannot say, for when I had pursued it for about half an hour with a momentarily increasing and by no means pleasant conviction that I was going in a very opposite direction to Luchon, a colossal winged-like figure loomed immediately before me through the mist and rain, which resolved itself into a priest mounted on a mulè, enveloped in an ample brown cloth cloak, flapping in the wind. The sight was particularly gratifying, and after mutual greetings, I asked him whether he could put me on the path to Cazeau. "I am going there," he answered; "and will guide you." This was fortunate, particularly as, had I not met the

priest, I should most assuredly have been lost on the mountain, for he told me that the path which I had erroneously taken soon splits into faint tracks, leading only to a few huts scattered on the slopes, which I should in all probability have missed in the gloom.* And if it has ever been your fate to lose your way during a storm in an unknown mountain land on the verge of evening, you will appreciate my joy at my good luck on this occasion. The path was too narrow to admit of our riding side by side, so I followed the priest, who assured me that he knew every inch of the mountain. Our attempts to hold converse were very abortive, for although we roared at each other, the storm blew away so many words that we had great difficulty in understanding what was said. I gathered, however, that the priest had been shriving an old shepherd who was lying at the point of death in a cabin on the mountain side.

* Ramond justly remarks that though the tourist may be exposed to greater dangers in the High Alps than in the Pyrenees, his progress is not so frequently arrested in Switzerland, from the want of paths, as it is in the Pyrenees. Throughout the Alps there are numerous well-marked paths trodden by the feet of the peasants passing continually from one canton to another; but in the Pyrenees, and especially near the frontier between Spain and France, precisely where the scenery is the grandest, paths are rare and ill-defined on account of the unfrequent communication between the two nations, excepting at the principal passes.

He was proceeding to tell me more, when my pony came to a sudden check, and looking up, I saw the priest's mule had halted on the edge of a precipice. The storm and great obscurity had fairly perplexed his rider, well acquainted as he was with the mountain, for mistaking a ledge for the path, he had gone along it, until it terminated in a precipice, not high, for we could see the base, but sufficiently lofty to make us thankful that we had not gone over it. Backing our mules, we gained the right track, and arrived at Cazeau without further incident. Here we parted, not, however, until the curé had given me a kind invitation to rest at his house for the night; but the road to Luchon was well defined, and I preferred pushing on to that place. Though only a little after seven, it was quite dark when I arrived. I created no little astonishment when I walked into the hall of the Hôtel de Londres, the water streaming from me on all sides, and I half expected to be turned out on the plea that there was no room vacant.

The landlord, however, was a kind man, and not only gave me a comfortable room, but promised me a change of clothes, my bag being thoroughly wet. True to his word, the *fille de chambre* came into my room laden with coats, waistcoats, trousers and shirts, and so strong was her sympathy for the poor

wet Monsieur, that she would, I believe, have performed the duties of a valet had I allowed her. I told her, however, that she could render me great service by ordering a hot supper to be prepared as soon as possible for me, of which I stood in great need.

Oh, the luxury of dry clothes after being long wrapped in wet garments! To be sure, mine host's were a world too wide for me; but what did that signify? they were warm, and full of comfort. On proceeding to the *salle-à-manger*, I found a party of four Frenchmen seated at supper. They had started in the morning for the Port de Venasque, but had returned when about half way. "Le ciel a fondu sur nous," they exclaimed; and, as there was nothing to be seen, they came back. The disappointment had apparently soured their temper; for, while eating, they abused everybody and everything, their anger culminating when England was mentioned. The country and people were alike disagreeable, neither being possessed, in their opinion, of a single good quality. I was sitting in a distant corner of the room, and in my foreign costume was not, I am sure, supposed to be a son of "perfide Albion." The odds were against me in a physical point of view; but I was, nevertheless, determined to let them know that

I was an Englishman, and that I would not hear England unjustly maligned in a public room. While considering how I should announce my country, they began abusing the *garçon* for not having brought a corkscrew with a bottle of wine which they had ordered. Drawing out my rather formidable-looking travelling-knife, which contained a corkscrew, I walked across the room to where they were sitting, proclaimed my country, and offered them the use of the corkscrew, though, I added, I scarcely knew whether I did right in offering it to persons who had spoken so disrespectfully of England. Lengthened apologies followed, which of course I took for what they were worth, being sufficiently satisfied at having stopped the current of their slanderous talk.

CHAP. XVII.

Parisian Society in the Pyrenees.—Whip-cracking.—The Baths of Luchon.—The Allée des Bains.—Price of the Baths.—The thermal Springs.—Their geological Features.—Temperature.—Remarkable Changes in the Springs.—The Romans at Luchon.—Lapidary Inscriptions.—The God Lixon.—Features of Luchon. Bazaars.—Lotteries.—An ill-mated Couple.—Spanish Minstrels. —Excursion to the Port de Venasque.—Val de Lys.—Castel Vielh. —Pic de la Pique.—Lizards.—The Hospice.—A provident Guide.—Mountain Mists.—Pic de Picade.—Natural Stairs.—The Tinker's Grave.—The Man Rock.—The Four Lakes.—Ice Islands.—The Port.—The Maladetta.—The first Ascent.—Pic de Nethou.—Trou de Toro.—Port de Picade.—Flora of the Port.—Pic de Picade.—The Vulture of the Pyrenees.—A mining Speculator.—The Marquis of Rhodes.—The Bears of Venasque. —Ossiferous Caves.—Cloud-scapes.

THE tourist in the Pyrenees, who is unable to live alone with Nature, need never long be at a loss for companions, for a day's journey will plunge him into the whirl of Parisian society; unless, indeed, his wanderings lead him into the Eastern Pyrenees, where, as we shall see, towns are rare, and Parisians and English few and far between.

A terrific cracking of whips — a plague in the Pyrenees — at a very early hour in the morning, made me aware that I was again among athletic invalids;

and, looking out, I saw the usual activity and excitement prevalent among this class at the Pyrenean springs. Parties were starting on various water-drinking and bathing expeditions, walking, riding, or chaired, with a vivacity not at all in keeping with broken-down constitutions.

My desire to explore Luchon before breakfast was baffled by the *fille* informing me that my clothes were not nearly dry; and, as I had not the courage to venture out in my landlord's garments, I was obliged to play the sluggard's part, and breakfast at a late hour with a motley crowd of guests.

This over, I went to see the town, directing my steps in the first instance to the grand "Baths" at the end of the *Allée*, one of the principal promenades. This establishment contains ninety-eight baths, which are insufficient, however, to meet the demand; for the waters of Luchon, issuing from forty-two springs, are recommended for so many ailments, that whatever complaint you may be suffering from, real or imaginary, here are naiads who will cure you.* And this is the more extraordinary (*if true*) when we

* The price of the baths varies, according to the time when they are taken, from 70 cents. to 1 fr. 20 cents. Douches from 35 cents. to 80 cents., linen included. The time prescribed for a bath is one hour; for a douche, fifteen minutes. All the springs are alike in price.

know that the springs rise so near to each other, that it has been found necessary to divide some of them by stone partitions.

There are no thermal springs in the Pyrenees which possess greater scientific interest than those at Bagnères de Luchon; for notwithstanding that they rise within, as I have said, a few feet of each other, they differ in their properties, and considerably in their temperature.

The granite of this district, erroneously laid down in Charpentier's geological map, is a continuation of the regular band crossing the valley at and above Bagnères de Luchon, and Professor Forbes believes it to be connected with the granite of the Val d'Aran in Spain, and probably with that in the vicinity of Lac Espingo.

The height of Luchon is 2008 feet above the sea. In 1835, Professor Forbes found the temperature of two of the principal hot springs, La Reine and La Grotte Supérieure, to be 110° and 139° respectively. Both these springs are liable to be flooded by rain-water, for it has been found that after heavy rain the discharge was four times greater than usual, and their temperature fell several degrees.

But the most interesting fact in connection with

the thermal heat of these springs is, that the Source de la Reine was a cold spring until 1755. In that year the great earthquake of Lisbon occurred, and immediately after the spring attained a temperature of 124°, or fourteen degrees above its present heat; for since that period the temperature has gradually decreased. Many other springs were affected by that terrible phenomenon, and I believe that the earthquake which was felt so sensibly in the Val d'Héas and at Luz, in October, 1835, had an influence on the Luchon springs.

Another remarkable character of these springs is that their sulphurous properties are not constant. A long and laborious investigation, by MM. François and Filhol, the results of which are published in the "Annuaire des Eaux de la France," led to the discovery that the waters are more sulphurous when the barometer is high than when it is low, and M. Filhol also found that the quantity of sulphur is greater in cold weather than during summer.

The Romans made great use of the Luchon springs: in digging the foundation of the houses, many lapidary inscriptions were discovered relating to their residence here, most of which have been removed to the very interesting museum of antiquities at Toulouse. Two,

however, are preserved in the Court of the "Baths." One is on a votive altar having the representation of an amphora on one side, surmounting the following letters: —

NYMPHIS
AUG.
SACRUM.

Another altar, bears the words:—

LIXONI DEO
FABIA FESTA
V. S. L. M.

This god Lixon is supposed to have been a Celtic divinity to whom the springs were dedicated, and from whom the place derives its present name.*

Luchon is a coquettish-looking town, set in grand scenery which almost girdles the houses, so that you are at no loss for pleasant excursions. Bustle and gaiety concentrate in the *Allée des Bains,* a triple avenue of limes lined with buildings including the chief inns. The trees are festooned with scarlet

* Four stone altars, consecrated to gods hitherto unknown in heathen mythology, were found in 1829 in the Pyrenees. One was dedicated to the god Alcassi; the second to Ilumber, a god of the Gauls; the third to Fagus, supposed to be the beech-tree, considered as a divinity, this tree being very abundant throughout the Pyrenees; and the fourth to Xuban.

calico, bearing the names of the shopkeepers and shops, for every shop at Luchon, be it ever so small, has a name. "La Belle Anglaise" is a common sign, justified, I am happy to say, by facts; others of a very whimsical nature may be seen throughout the *allée*, the "Pauvre Diable," a particular favourite with French shopkeepers, being much in fashion. These signs, the trinkety nature of the goods, and the bazaar-like manner in which they are exhibited, give a gay appearance to Luchon. Lotteries are in great favour. 'Tis a lawful way of gambling quietly and the purses of all classes are consulted. You can buy tickets from a napoleon to a sous, and on all sides you are pestered to try your luck, which if in the ascendant may make you the possessor of a gilt mustard-pot, a china dog, or a shrill whistle.

As running accompaniment to this clamour, are numerous criers announcing amusements, and the eternal whip-cracking which goes on with scarcely any intermission from morning to night. In the afternoon the promenades are crowded with *échantillons* of all nations, many Spaniards mixing with the throng, who, if less aristocratic than the French, are far more picturesque.

At the *table d'hôte* dinner, where, by the way, we had real izzard in great abundance, and a liberal

supply of mountain strawberries, I met a greater number of English than I had previously seen in the Pyrenees. Among them was a couple who had very recently been married, and who had decided on spending the treacle-moon, as Byron called it, amidst these mountains, but which, in the case of the lady, seemed to be the very opposite to sweet. No contrast could be greater than that between this newly yoked pair. The husband was an officer in the army, a fine gallant fellow in the prime of life, bronzed by long exposure in the battle-field, with a keen enjoyment for nature, fond of climbing mountains, and anxious to see the Pyrenees. His wife, who seemed to have just laid aside her dolls, was one of those frail drawing-room exotics, happily not very common in England, who had been educated apparently merely to dazzle by her accomplishments. Grand scenery had no charms for her, and when her husband talked of joining me in an expedition to the Port de Venasque, she protested against going, declaring that she did not care to see the scenery, and alleging that the difficulties of the undertaking were far too great for her to bear. Perhaps she was right, for neither her person nor dress were at all calculated to undergo any rough work. Fancy ascending the Port de Venasque in a *robe ballonnée*, and a thin

chaussure. I will not say that the gentleman was already realising the truth of the proverb, that "you may marry in haste and repent at leisure," but I know that he would have been more pleased had his wife liked mountain excursions better than promenading in the *Allée des Bains*.

During the dinner, itinerant Spanish minstrels sang various national airs to a guitar accompaniment. The singers themselves were more pleasing than their music, which was so indifferent that we were glad the performers were in the street. The minstrels you meet in the Pyrenean towns are not good performers; if they went serenading, they would deserve the fate which befell Gil Blas, when he serenaded Donna Mergelina; and as your remembrance of this gentleman's adventures may be at fault on this point, I will tell you what the fair lady did:—"elle lui coiffa d'une cassolette qui ne chatouillait point l'odorat."

The following morning broke with doubtful promise of fair weather, but not caring to spend another day in Luchon, I engaged a guide and horse, and started at seven o'clock for the Port de Venasque. Again my endeavours to meet with a companion were fruitless, no one seemed inclined to go so far. I had hopes that the gentleman with the child-like

bride might have joined me; but the lady made objections, and they had only been married a fortnight.

On leaving Luchon you enter the Val de Lys, so called from the numerous streams watering the lovely valley;—Lys being an old provincial word for water. If you are a landscape-sketcher, you will pause near the picturesque ruined Castel Vielh perched on a crag; you would say it had been placed where it is for artistic purposes, but the intentions of the builder were of a sterner nature, the castle having been constructed to defend the entrance into the Val Luchon by the ports of Portillon and Venasque. Beyond the castle, we entered a pine and birch forest, through the openings of which you obtain glorious views of the Pic de la Pique and the Estaorvas mountain, above the Port de Venasque.

During our ride through this forest, I saw a great number of large lizards on the path. They had bright yellow bodies, patched with grey blotches, and, unlike the common small lizard of the south of Europe, were extremely sluggish. My guide declared that the animal was easily irritated, and that its skin was poisonous. I disproved the assertion in my own case, by dismounting and seizing one of the animals without being in any way inconvenienced

by it. The poor lizard, I apprehend, suffers in reputation like many other ugly beasts, which are pronounced vicious and poisonous merely because they are hideous.

As we progressed, the sad spoiler of mountain scenery came upon us, wrapping the landscape in a cold misty mantle. I trembled for the success of my expedition, but the guide, who professed to be learned in the weather of these parts, assured me that we should presently emerge from the mist, for it was blowing hard at a higher elevation. Meanwhile, however, the atmosphere became thicker, and our view was limited to a few yards. We came upon the hospice almost as soon as we saw it, and so chilly was the temperature, that I was well pleased to see a large fire blazing on the hearth. This hospice belongs to the commune of Luchon, and is the last house in France on your way to Spain, through the Port de Venasque. Outwardly, it resembles the Alpine hospices, but possesses very few of the comforts of those in Switzerland. It is, in fact, a true Spanish posada, oily, dirty, and foul smelling. Two thin partitions divide the interior into three apartments, that in the centre being devoted to cooking and eating, and the two others to a stable and storehouse. The hospice is untenanted during the winter,

but the store-room is stocked with a supply of provisions. Travellers availing themselves of these are expected to deposit a small sum in a box provided for the purpose.

The hospice is let by the commune of Luchon to a farmer for 3000 francs a year. This payment entitles him to levy a toll of twenty-five sous on every mule or horse passing from France to Spain, and five sous on every person merely visiting the pass. These tolls, with his profits as an innkeeper, and a little quiet business with the *contrabandistas*, enable him, he says, to live. His great harvest is reaped during snow-storms in the autumn and spring, when muleteers are unable to pass the port, and remain at the hospice until the weather moderates. The common dormitory on such occasions is the hay-loft, and the charge for sleeping there is two sous a night. Apprehending that no meat would be forthcoming, my guide had brought a supply of mutton-chops from Luchon, which he proceeded to cook very artistically over the embers of the wood fire, while the stout *fille*, who seemed to perform the duties of cook, waitress, and ostler, warmed a bowl of milk.

When we left the hospice, the mists were still curling up from the valley, festooning the sides of the mountains with light fantastic wreaths. We now

entered a kind of amphitheatre gouged out of the Pic de Picade, from the base of which flows one of the tributaries of the Garonne. Looking up in the direction of the Port you are totally at a loss to guess how the ascent is to be made, so precipitous are the mighty rock walls. Just, however, as a spiral staircase conducts you to the summit of a lofty tower, so do an interminable series of natural steps in the schistose rock, between bands of gneiss, forming the crests of the mountains on the east and west of the Port de Venasque, enable you to attain the top of the cirque. But the stairs are so steep, that although you can ride up, I felt that it would be cruel to do so, and dismounting left my horse to pick his way upwards, which he did in a manner showing him to be a very expert mountaineer.

This ascent is the great feature of the Port de Venasque, being at all times very arduous, and in the early part of the year dangerous. All traces of vegetation, beyond a few stunted lichens, had now disappeared, and the steep staircase path corkscrews its way between the rocks in a wonderful manner. Some hang so loosely that a mere touch sends them hurling to the bottom. A rock of hill-like proportions is pointed out at the base of the cirque, said to have been precipitated from the summit of the over-

hanging precipice by a great snow fall. A party of six men were crossing the pass from Venasque at the time, four of whom were unfortunately swept down in a moment. Their bodies were found at the end of several weeks when the snow had melted, in a hollow near the great rock fragment, and lie there still, for where they fell they were buried. The Port de Venasque is indeed the grave of many French and Spaniards. A singular locality, called the *Trou des Chaudronniers,* was the scene a few years ago of a most terrible catastrophe. Nine itinerant tinkers, on their way to the Port from Luchon, were overwhelmed by an avalanche, and precipitated into the hole bearing the name of their calling.

When we had ascended about three thousand feet, we suddenly emerged from the mist, and entered what might be called a storm zone, so furiously did the wind blow. The vapour was rent by the blast, and through the openings we saw a congregation of pinnacles high above us. Up, still up, in the teeth of the howling tempest which frequently beat us back. About half-way between the Hospice and the Port, there is a curiously-shaped rock, surmounted by a pillar. It is called the Man Rock, and serves as a beacon to warn those descending to keep to the right, as beneath the rock lurks a very ugly precipice.

Higher we came to four small lakes of a steel blue hue. A glacier covers the slope of the precipice, immediately over one of the sheets of water, and projects into the lake. I was so struck by the scene that I scrambled down to the edge of the water. Here you may see, on a small scale, the phenomenon of the formation of icebergs. For, as the glacier descends, fragments of ice become detached, and float on the lake in the form of tiny ice islands. The colouring of them is exquisitely beautiful, varying from the deepest blue where sunk beneath the water, to the dazzling white of the pure snow on their surface. They seem like fairy creations; and I was fancying what kind of Naiad might inhabit them, when my day-dream was dispelled by my guide's voice, who was far above me, getting through his task slowly, but steadily, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and wondering probably what I could see in the four small lakes to pause for. Resuming the climb, I toiled upwards, the steepness of the mountain being now so great, that the path zigzags abruptly every dozen feet. You are literally surrounded by grim precipices, rising continually before you. Bold was that man who first found a way among them through the Port de Venasque. At length, after having

climbed almost vertically for two hours, the pass appeared above us. The last steps are the steepest, but they were soon surmounted, and I stood in the Port. The wonders of this remarkable wedge-like fissure have not been exaggerated. Standing within the Port, you see the mighty Maladetta immediately before you, rising from the valley without a single interposing object, grim, awful, and sublime. The name is peculiarly appropriate, for the mountain does indeed look accursed, the pines on its lower sides are stunted and blasted, and the peaks above the eternal snows and glaciers are shattered by the storms and lightnings of centuries.

Legions of wild thoughts went wandering through my brain as I gazed on the spectacle, which is so remarkable as to be well worth journeying expressly from England to see. Did this mighty mass of granite spring from the earth, bursting the adjacent rocks, or was its birth a long and laborious process? Some geologists conceive that the convulsive throes which uplifted the Maladetta formed the Port de Venasque. But all is wild speculation. Enough, perhaps, for us to know that here is one of Nature's mightiest monuments, created by the same hand that bids the humble lichen grow. Well has it been said that mountains are a feeling:

"Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains;"

and the man must be, indeed, devoid of all feeling who could behold the Maladetta unmoved.

Ramond was the first to make us acquainted with the Montagnes Maudites, erroneously supposed in his day to be in France; but he did not succeed in attaining the highest point, which is the Pic de Néthou. Indeed, he was evidently doubtful on the subject; for he says, after relating the various difficulties of the undertaking,—"J'étois, selon mon estime, au sommet de la montagne, ou à peu de distance, mais dans l'impossibilité d'aller plus avant, et de vérifier ma situation; privé, par les nuages qui arrivoient du midi et qui rasoient la cime, de la vue de la région méridionale et orientale, et ne pouvant promener mes regards que sur les monts accumulés au nord et au couchant. La terre semblait fuir sous moi, et je m'enfonçois dans les orages d'un ciel courroucé. Je m'arrêtai donc."* Ramond's ascent was made in 1787; and the account of his adventures was not at all calculated to render the Maladetta less formidable. The loss of a guide in 1824 in a crevasse on its flanks maintained the bad

* Observations faites dans les Pyrénées, p. 241.

reputation of the mountain; and it was not until 1842 that the highest peak was surmounted. The feat was accomplished by M. de Franquéville, a French gentleman, accompanied by a Russian officer and three guides. In an account of the expedition M. de Franqueville says: — "Enfin, nous posâmes le pied sur le pic, jusque-là vierge du pas de l'homme. Nous pouvions goûter sans restriction le plaisir d'avoir réussi à conduire à une heureuse fin une expédition si souvent tentée, et toujours inutilement. À peine arrivés sur le sommet du Pic de Néthou, les guides commencèrent à ramasser des fragments de rochers et à dresser une pyramide, comme pour prendre possession du lieu. Ils l'élevèrent assez haut pour qu'on put l'apercevoir du Port de Venasque, et qu'elle servit ainsi à constater l'heureux succès de notre ascension."

M. de Franqueville describes the summit of the peak as being "une plateforme d'une trentaine de mètres de longueur, sur six ou huite mètres de largeur. Ce plateau est entièrement couvert de fragments de granit de diverses formes, et de grosseurs très-variées. De tous côtés, excepté de celui de la rampe par laquelle nous étions arrivés, s'ouvrent d'effroyables précipices."

It is always interesting to read the story of the first ascent of a mountain which has baffled previous ex-

plorers; and, flushed by his success, we can understand and make due allowance for M. de Franqueville's picture of the difficulties of the ascent of the Maladetta. Latterly, however, the topmost crest, 11,426 feet above the sea, has been frequently trodden by our countrymen; and in these days, when Englishmen go up Mont Blanc without a guide, and up Monte Rosa without guide or coat, the ascent of the Maladetta can only be regarded as a morning's walk.

Leaving our horses in the care of a boy near the Port de Venasque, we scrambled down the steep slopes on the Spanish side to the celebrated Trou de Toro, on the north-east flanks of the Maladetta. Into this, consisting of a circular hole, some twenty feet deep, the waters of the glaciers pour with tremendous roar, and after an underground course, break forth in the Val d'Artigues Tellina, forming the chief source of the Garonne. The scene is extremely wild and impressive, and the path, or rather track to the Trou, abounds with magnificent views of the impending mountains.

On regaining our horses we rode through the Port de Picade, passing from Arragon into Catalonia. The remains of a redoubt, erected by the Spaniards during the French war, mark the boundary between the two provinces. Let no one dream of sunny

Spain to be seen here,—of orange-groves or myrtle-bowers, sloping pastures and picturesque villages. Snow-drifts occupy the foreground, and beyond rise glacier-ribbed mountains, peak above peak,—some wearing a white diadem, others black as night. But although the face of nature is barren, there are exquisite gems of vegetation nestling in sheltered localities on the Spanish side of the Port de Venasque. As I write I have before me lovely specimens of the *Gentiana verna*,—the *Aquilegia vulgaris*, or columbine, and other flowers, which I gathered near the Port; and I have no doubt that a zealous botanist might make a large collection in this locality.

The wind, which had been increasing in violence as we ascended, blew now with such hurricane-force as to make it easy to conceive the terrible situation of the traveller overtaken here by a snow-storm. I could not stand upright against the blast; and I shall long remember its violence, for it robbed me of a much-valued onyx pin—a cherished souvenir of Rome. The pin became detached from my scarf in one of its many flutterings in the gale; and may now be doing duty in fastening the blanket-cloak round a Spanish contrabandista. The Pic de Picade, beneath which we were now passing, was ascended some years ago by a chasseur, who found the blanched leg-bone of a mule on the summit,—doubtless borne

there by an eagle, which wished to enjoy its meal undisturbed:

"The eagle sits
On the eagle stone:
And his broad wing flits
O'er the snow white bone."

During the day I saw three of these birds, or rather vultures, for the lammergeier of the Alps and Pyrenees is a true vulture, bearing the hard scientific name of *Nephron percnopterus*. The Alpine bird is said to be larger than that inhabiting the Pyrenees, but their partiality for lamb is the same, and both are equally dreaded by the shepherd during the lambing season.

On our way back we had to ride along a very narrow ridge, running from the Port de Picade into France. My guide was in advance, and, letting my horse pick his way, I was gazing round, when a cry from my leader caused me to look ahead, and I saw him swerving on one side, half out of his saddle. I guessed the cause in a moment. He had suddenly passed from a calm into a hurricane, the locality where I was when I heard his voice being sheltered from the wind by a huge rock, while that, where he was nearly blown from his saddle, was fully exposed to the fury of the storm. Having been warned, I was prepared for the shock, but not being a heavy weight, I think it quite possible that had I been in

advance, I might have been blown over the ridge; not a pleasant thought, as there are ugly precipices on each side.

When half way down the mountain, we fell in with the director of the lead and silver mines, opened some years ago on the northern side of the Pic de Picade. We rode together and, *chemin faisant*, he gave me an account of himself and of the mines, in the district. Born in Guadaloupe, reared *partout*, as he said, he had spent half his life wandering about the world seeking for hidden riches, and was at Trieste when he heard of the great mineral wealth of the mountains near Luchon.

Accordingly he started off; persuaded some gentlemen in Paris to advance money, and having obtained a licence from Government, opened lead mines, which yielded one ounce of silver in thirteen pounds of lead. In the course of his explorations among the mountains, he came upon ancient workings on the slopes of the Pic de Picade, which he attributed to the Romans, who were well acquainted with the mineral wealth of the Western Pyrenees.

He was, like all mining speculators, very sanguine of success, and talked of extending his operations; but I believe he has since found that mining in the Pyrenees is nearly as unprofitable as it was in the

days of the Marquis of Rhodes. Who was the Marquis of Rhodes? you may ask. Hear Montesquieu: "Dans la guerre pour la succession d'Espagne, un homme appelé le Marquis de Rhodes, de qui on disoit qu'il s'étoit ruiné dans les mines d'or et enrichi dans les hôpitaux*, proposa à la cour de France d'ouvrir les mines des Pyrénées. Il cita les Tyriens, les Carthaginois et les Romains. On lui permit de chercher: il chercha; il fouilla partout; il citait toujours, et ne trouvait rien."†

My companion's mining excursions in the mountains were, according to his statements, of a very adventurous nature, leading him into localities of great danger. But, strange as it may appear, precipices, glaciers, and even avalanches, were far less terrible to him than the bears, of which he declared he was greatly afraid. He was the only person I met in the Pyrenees who had killed a bear; for although he gave the "gaillards," as he called them, a wide berth, he occasionally came suddenly upon them, and once shot a huge beast, almost "à bout portant."

The Pyrenean bear, according to my mining friend, still abounds in the dense forests at the head of the Val d'Artigues Tellina. He assured me that he had

* He was engaged in the management of various Government hospitals.

† De l'Esprit des Lois, livre li. chap. xi.

seen a bear making off into a forest with a sheep which he had caught straying from a flock. They are not particular respecting their diet, flesh and vegetable being alike acceptable. They are particularly fond of mountain strawberries, and the peasants can tell at a glance when their wild strawberry beds in the forests have been invaded by bears, by the havock they make among the plants.

But Bruin, like John Bull, thrives better on flesh than on fruits and vegetables; animal diet renders him also bold and savage. The keeper in the Zoological Gardens informs me that they dare not give the bears in confinement animal food, as it would make them very ferocious. They are limited to a farinaceous diet, with an occasional *bonne bouche* in the form of a few vegetables.

In the Pyrenees, as in the Alps, when a bear has tasted mutton, he endeavours to live on this food, and makes many successful descents on the sheepfold before he is killed. There is a well authenticated story of fifteen sheep having been destroyed by a bear, in the Grindelwald, and when tracked to its haunts on the little Scheideck, the remains of thirty other sheep were found. How many more may have been slaughtered by this wholesale butcher is not known, as his track was lost on a glacier, and he escaped the hunters.

You may still, I believe, be pretty sure of finding a bear on the slopes of the Monts Maudites and in the Val d'Essera, and also many izzards. Some years ago, an English gentleman lost his life after a very successful bear and izzard hunt on the Maladetta. He was descending the mountain, after having killed a bear, when, in consequence of a slip, his gun went off, and he received the contents of one barrel in his left arm. Had surgical assistance been at hand, his life would probably have been saved, but his companion was unable to arrest the flow of blood, and he bled to death.

The Hospice d'Artiga de Lin is surrounded by a high wall, to keep the bears out; and all the inhabitants of the border between Catalonia and Luchon, live in constant apprehension during the winter of the visits of Bruin. But his race, as I have said elsewhere, is declining fast in the Pyrenees, as throughout Europe. One is bewildered by the evidence of the abundance of bears in former ages. There are caves in Westphalia where mighty multitudes of bears must have lived and died. The late Dr. Buckland states that, in the Kuhlöch cavern alone, the proportions of which are nearly equal to that of the interior of a large church, the remains of at least 2500 bears exist.*

The ossiferous caves in the scuth of France, and

* Reliquiæ Diluvianæ.

those in England also, teem with the fossil remains of these animals. And our wonder increases when we learn, that the bears of these caves* were nearly as large as a horse.

Even as late as the Roman dominion, bears were so abundant in Britain as to be exported to Rome for gladiatorial purposes; and Ray mentions that the brown bear was hunted in Wales. Indeed the name Pennarth, or the Bear's Head, is evidence that this animal formerly existed in the Principality.

I parted from my entertaining companion at the head of the Val de Pique. The ride back to Luchon, now that we had descended beneath the storm zone, was delightful. The heavens were piled with aërial structures.

> "Lo! in the burning West, the craggy nape
> Of a proud Ararat! and, thereupon,
> The Ark, her melancholy voyage done!
> Yon rampant cloud mimics a lion's shape;
> There — combats a huge crocodile — agape
> A golden spear to swallow! and that brown
> And massy grove so near yon blazing town,
> Stirs and recedes, destruction to escape!"

And when these faded, the grand mountains stood darkly out against the setting sun.

* *Ursus Spelæus* and *Ursus Arctoideus*. See, for some account of the bones of these animals, a paper by John Hunter in the Phil. Trans. 1794.

CHAP. XVIII.

Luchon to Toulouse. — St. Gaudens. — Ancient Church. — Legend of St. Gaudens. — The Plain of Languedoc. — A Gastronome. — Old Toulouse. — The Market-Place. — Truffles. — St. Sernin. — St. Etienne. — Peculiar Architecture. — Cuffing a Jew. —Museum of Antiquities. — Exquisite Cloisters.

A TOURIST proceeding for the first time from Toulouse to Luchon, would, I apprehend, give a very different account of the journey to what would be given by one travelling from Luchon to Toulouse. The truth is, that after wandering among the mountains, a comparatively flat road, such as that between these places, seems terribly dull and monotonous.

I had a strong desire to see Toulouse; but before we enter the ancient capital of Languedoc, I wish to say a few words respecting St. Gaudens, where, if you start from Luchon by a diligence early in the morning, you will arrive about noon. Not that the town itself is worth your looking at, but the church is certainly one of the most interesting Romanesque structures in the south of France, though but a wreck of its original grandeur. As late as 1807, a great

portion of the vast cloisters was in existence; now, not a pillar remains.

The desecration of this church is the more remarkable from the circumstance that St. Gaudens was a famous saint, whose history forms a brilliant chapter in the voluminous book of early Christian martyrs. But the inhabitants of St. Gaudens are ignorant of, or have forgotten, the fame of their patron saint, after whom their town is called. At least, no one whom I asked at St. Gaudens could tell me anything about him. I find, however, from an interesting account of the church, in the Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Toulouse, that the saint, who lived in the latter part of the fifth century, was originally a shepherd, tending his flocks near a small hamlet called Mansio (now St. Gaudens); that he became a very learned and devout man, and made many converts to Christianity. This incensed Theodoric King of the Goths, who, failing to make Gaudenius abandon his religious labours, ordered him to be tortured and executed. Legendary hagiology relates that he gladly joined the holy army of martyrs, and that wonderful miracles followed his death. The place of his sepulture became holy ground, and a large church was erected over his tomb, the hamlet meanwhile swelling to the proportions of a considerable town.

The circumstances attending the death of the Gothic King, which occurred not long after that of St. Gaudens, were so remarkable as to increase the fame of the saint; for although they are more intimately associated with the murder of another holy man, yet the admirers of St. Gaudens were not slow in connecting them with his execution. The story is related by Procopius, in De Bello Gothico, and runs thus:— The King had unjustly caused Symmachus to be executed, and a few days afterwards was sitting at supper, when a fish's head, which was before him, assumed the appearance, to his diseased imagination, of the head of the murdered Symmachus. As he gazed with horror on the spectacle, he declared that he saw it furiously menacing him with jaws armed with frightful teeth. Terrified by the apparition, he retired into his private chamber, threw himself on his bed, and covered his head with a great quantity of clothes, under which he was found dead. And to strengthen this supernatural tale, Pope Gregory the Great relates in his Dialogus de Vita, that at the period of Theodoric's death, a hermit of great sanctity saw Pope John and Symmachus hurling the King into a pit of fire.

Soon after leaving St. Gaudens, you enter the vast plains of Languedoc, teeming with agricultural

abundance, but so uninteresting to the tourist fresh from the mountains as to make you regret that a projected railway from Toulouse to Spain only exists on paper. The scheme is to carry a line by St. Martory through the valley of Salat, across the Pyrenees at the source of that river, and then through the valley of Noguera Paillaressa to Lerida. The accomplishment of this project will enable the tourist to reach the Pyrenees without undergoing the purgatory of a diligence journey.

"I envy you," said a Parisian gastronome, when he heard that I was going to Toulouse, "because you will be able to eat truffles there *à bon marché*." "Go," he added, "to the Hôtel des Empereurs, where you will get delicious truffles." I thanked him for his information, but not being a gourmand did not follow his recommendation; and if I had patronised the "Empereurs," I should not have indulged in this dainty esculent, pronounced by high authorities to be "*le diamant de la cuisine*." For truffles, even at Toulouse, are twenty-three francs a pound; and you may, therefore, form some notion of the figure that would be attached to a "*sauté de truffes*" in your bill, if you indulged in such a dish.

No contrast can be greater than that between the towns in the gorges of the Pyrenees, where your view

is bounded by great rock walls or dark solemn forests within a few yards of you, and Toulouse in the midst of the extensive plain of Languedoc.

The change is not, however, without a charm; for, after long companionship with mountains and forests, an ancient city full of remarkable buildings possesses great interest. And such is Toulouse,—by no means beautiful, but, on the contrary, abounding in old houses, intersected by narrow, foot-torturing, labyrinthine, dirty streets, which may have been thoroughfares when Toulouse was the capital of the kingdom of the Visigoths in the fifth century.

A market-place, in full business, has been well called a family picture of a town; and if you visit that at Toulouse, you will have a very good notion of the vastness of the city and the fruitfulness of the country. I do not suppose that there exists in the whole world such an abundant fruit and vegetable market concentrated in one locality. Conceive the area of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields heaped with a great variety of garden produce. This is about the size of the Place du Capitole, and this large square on market mornings is literally covered in the season with vegetables and fruit. Peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums and grapes of various kinds, apples, including the pomme d'amour, pears, green olives, figs green and black, bursting

their coats from very lusciousness, twelve for one sous, —you may choose them out of the basket; and as for vegetables, you would imagine that samples of all grown in Europe were here. The wealth of the great Languedoc plain is not exaggerated. Unhappily for the figure artist, the market people wear no picturesque costume, but nevertheless the great number of groups surrounded by pyramids of vegetables and fruits displayed beneath awnings and capacious red umbrellas, may be made to render good artistic service.

Among the vegetables I remarked a great number of fungi. They were in considerable demand, being purchased by all classes, who we must presume are acquainted with the edible varieties, for there is no officer at Toulouse similar to the Roman *Ispettore dei Funghi.* In answer to some questions respecting the *diamant de la cuisine,* I was informed that the truffle, which, by the way, is in perfection during January, emitting during that month to a greater degree than at any other time the extraordinary odour for which this delicacy is remarkable, has become extremely dear. For while the supply has not increased, the demand is yearly greater. Russian gastronomes now consume considerable quantities of truffles, and are willing to pay high prices for them.

These facts have led many persons to endeavour to cultivate this mysterious product with however but little success. Count Noe's method of sowing scrapings of the truffle in good truffle ground, has occasionally succeeded. Lately M. Ravel, one of the largest truffle merchants in France, has published his mode of proceeding, which involves a theory so opposed to all scientific notions respecting the growth of the truffle, that I am led to mention his process. He denies that the truffle is a vegetable production, and maintains, that just as the gall-nut is produced by the gall-fly, so is the truffle produced by the puncture of an insect (which he calls the truffigène) at the root of a certain variety of the oak, the result in both cases being an excrescence which protects the eggs of the insect. He grows the "truffle oak" from the acorn, and states that his beds have produced large quantities of truffles since the adoption of this plan.

But, besides the unsoundness of M. Ravel's theory respecting the nature of the truffle, he has jumped to the conclusion that, because he found truffles under a certain variety of oak, they are necessarily connected with this particular tree; and I understand that his statements respecting his large crops are not borne out by facts. There is something very mysterious in the growth of this fungus, which never appears above the

ground, and a rich harvest may be realised by any one who discovers a certain method of producing it.

I spent three very pleasant days in Toulouse amidst relics of the past. The churches, built for the most part of small bricks like those used in the construction of the Coliseum, are highly interesting: Romanesque St. Sernin, with its five apsidal chapels and lofty octagonal tower tapering to five storeys, is still extremely picturesque, though no longer encompassed by walls and battlements, which made it formerly a Fortress Church. These defences fell before the great revolutionary storm; but in the eyes of the faithful a far more grievous misfortune was the desecration of the tombs in the crypt, *believed* to have contained the bodies of seven of the Apostles. The motto, "*Non est in toto sanctior orbe locus*" formerly displayed over the entrance to the vaults testifies how holy the place was esteemed. The Suisse who conducts you through the vast crypt mourns over the loss of the sainted bones, but finds comfort in the fact, that the curious and magnificent shrines yet remaining afford excellent capital for exhibition purposes.

The Cathedral of St. Etienne, though not nearly so large as St. Sernin, is even more interesting. Dating from the commencement of the thirteenth century, it combines various styles of architecture, giving you

the idea, from the remarkable want of unity in the various parts, that each architect intended to build a perfect cathedral after his own design, but stopped short when he had completed an aisle, tower, or chapel. Thus the nave is opposite a side aisle, the gorgeous rose window is not over the centre of the portal, the side walls are not parallel, and the tower is ingeniously irregular. Nevertheless the interior is grand and gloomy, carrying you back to the dark ages which hung long and heavily over Toulouse. The Cathedral figures prominently in the history of ecclesiastical oppression; and the Jews must have held St. Etienne in particular detestation, for, says the Chronicler Pierre de Marca, a custom existed in the early part of the eleventh century to cuff a Jew publicly in the Cathedral on Easter-day; and with such good will that on one occasion Hugues Viscount de Rochechouart struck a Jew so hard that he knocked his brains out: so that we must presume that to cuff a Jew at Toulouse in those days was equivalent to killing him.

But if you desire to know the archæological wealth of Toulouse you must visit the Musée; not the department devoted to extremely bad pictures, but the collection of antiquities preserved in the exquisite cloisters of the desecrated church of the Augustins.

In these silent corridors, surrounding a lovely garden, under sculptured arches, and between pillars of great beauty, are placed a vast collection of objects illustrative of the Roman dominion, and of the Middle Ages. Statues, bas-reliefs, amphoras, votive altars, covered with inscriptions abraded sufficiently to puzzle a learned antiquary for months, monumental effigies, and architectural gems from ruined churches and monasteries are here, and you are permitted to see them unbored by a cicerone. They seem set up to be photographed, so well do the lights fall through the arches on their carved and varied forms. Nowhere indeed could a photographer make a more interesting collection of ancient objects than here—valuable too, for only a few have been drawn. So if you are an amateur photographer, and have overcome the failures, take your camera with you when you visit Toulouse.

Looking at my note-book I find many jottings of objects, seen here and elsewhere in Toulouse, of which much might be said; but I will only ask the reader to accompany me to two other places in the ancient city, which are of sufficient importance to deserve a special chapter.

CHAP. XIX.

Place du Capitole. — Le Capitole. — Worthies of Toulouse. — La Société des Jeux Floraux. — Collège de la Gaie Science. — Constitution of the College. — Pierre Vidal. — Quixotic love. — Clémence Isaure. — Her endowment of the College. — Annual Distribution of the Floral Prizes. — Convent of the Inquisition. — The Albigenses. — Autos da Fé. — Spirit of Intolerance. — Revival of the belief in the Guilt of Jean Calas. — Persecution of Protestantism in France.

From the tortuous streets of old Toulouse you pass into the modern Place du Capitole, one side of which is occupied by the Hôtel de Ville, erected on the site of the Roman Capitol where the governors of Tectosagum, as Toulouse was called, exercised jurisdiction, A.D. 68. So say French historians, but as they candidly confess that "l'origine de Toulouse se perd dans le nuit des temps," we must not be too exacting respecting dates.

Full of the greatness of their history, and of the importance of their town, the modern Toulousians built the said Hôtel de Ville, which they wish you to call Le Capitole, these words appearing in large characters on the façade. The French are delighted with the great halls in this building. Toulousians

with that, in particular, dedicated to their worthies, represented by thirty-eight plaster busts standing in niches resplendent with gold and paint. Not, however, to see these did I visit the building, though there is one honoured name among them, Fermat the mathematician; but to look upon the home of La Société des Jeux Floraux, successor to the very interesting institution, Le Collège de la Gaie Science. The Society transacts ordinary business in one of the apartments in the Capitol devoted to the Académie Royale de Toulouse, but the distribution of prizes takes place in the Salle des Illustres. The Transactions of the Academy contain many interesting papers relative to the Society, which have enabled me to draw up the following short account of its history.

The origin and date of the establishment of the Collège de la Gaie Science are unknown, but manuscripts exist showing that the College was venerable in 1323. Seven poets, presided over by a chancellor, composed the establishment. Collectively they were styled the *gai consistoire,* and possessed a large house, (palais, according to French historians,) surrounded by gardens, in which they assembled. They conferred the degrees of Bachelor and Doctor on those who had passed an examination in the *Leys d'amor* or the rules of poetry. A manuscript bearing this title, exists in

the archives of the Société des Jeux Floraux. It was written by Molinin, Chancellor of the College, and gives a very curious account of the laws of versification and the rules of grammar in the fourteenth century.

The College acquired such renown by the poetical productions of the members, that in 1388, John, King of Arragon, requested Charles VI. of France to send him some members of the College, in order that he might found similar institutions at Barcelona and Tortosa. Two poets were accordingly despatched to Spain, colleges were established, and the members of that at Barcelona produced the work entitled "La Gaie Science," fragments of which have been published by Gregory of Mayans.

The doctors of the Toulouse College were particularly fruitful in poetical compositions—one of them, Pierre Vidal, left sixty poems, some of which are of great length. These are for the most part of a very amatory nature, reflecting the disposition of their author, who was noted for his Quixotic love adventures, which frequently entailed on him serious consequences. After having had his tongue pierced and losing his ears by outraged husbands, he made fierce love to a lady named Louve de Penautier. To prove the sincerity of his passion he assumed the name of

the Wolf, and clothed himself in wolf's skins. This conceit was well nigh proving fatal to him, for, taking it into his head to lead a pastoral life, he was one day surprised by shepherds who conceived him to be a real wolf, and not liking his proximity to their flocks, set their dogs upon him, which, before they could be called off, nearly tore him to pieces.

The College continued to enjoy prosperity until the close of the fourteenth century, when Toulouse being threatened by a siege, it became necessary for the purposes of defence to destroy the Society's palace and demolish their fair gardens. After this event they accepted the offer of a home in the Capitol. The change proved unfortunate; the Institution degenerated, and after lingering in comparative obscurity for nearly a century, was on the point of becoming extinct, when new life was infused into it by the munificence of Clémence Isaure. Of this lady but little is known; indeed some historians of Toulouse doubt that such a person ever existed. There seems, however, no good grounds for this conclusion. Various MSS. still in existence make honourable mention of her, and state that she was descended from the ancient Counts of Toulouse. Her epitaph informs us that her family was illustrious,—that she died at the age of fifty, and that she was never mar-

ried. Other records state that during her life she gave large sums of money for the maintenance and annual celebration of the Jeux Floraux. Mass, a discourse, and oblations preluded the annual fête for the distribution of prizes; which consisted of an amaranth and eglantine in gold; and a violet, a marigold, and a lily in silver. On her death she endowed the College with funds for the support of the members, and directed that a portion of the endowment should be set apart for the purchase of gold and silver flowers to be given as prizes annually; and that before these were distributed, a procession should proceed to her tomb and strew it with roses. Her testamentary wishes were carried into effect, and even surpassed, for the flowers annually awarded far exceeded in costliness those which had been previously given. The College now assumed the name of "Jeux Floraux," and the Bachelors and Doctors of "La Gaie Science" were styled Mainteneurs and Maîtres des Jeux Floraux. Heralded by trumpets, they marched annually through the principal streets of Toulouse, announcing that, in accordance with the will and testament of the Feue Madame Clémence Isaure de bonne mémoire, gold and silver flowers would be distributed as prizes in the Capitol to the authors of the best poems,—adding that it was expressly forbidden

"d'y mettre des paroles contre la foy, de prononcer aucun mot lascive ou tendante au scandale sous peine de prison."

The enrolled crowned poets of this period are lavish in their praises of Clémence. Poems are still in existence which make special mention of her; one, bearing the date 1498, is entitled "Canzo per laquel Bertrand de Roaix gasanhet l'eglantina novella que foe dada per dona Clamenca."

Here is a stanza from one of these poems:—

Reyna d'amors poderosa Clamença,
A vos me clam per trobar le repaus:
Que si de vos mos dictaty an un laus,
Aurey la flor que de vos pren naysensa.

When Francis the First, to whom the French have given the title "Restaurateur des lettres," visited Toulouse in 1503, and passed in procession through the streets, the statue of Clémence Isaure was placed in so conspicuous a position that the king especially noticed it. Many other circumstances lead to the conclusion that such a person really existed; and although clever and ingenious papers have been written, endeavouring to prove that Clémence is no other than the Virgin, the Toulousians still religiously believe that the patroness of the Jeux Floraux is not a mythical individual. They show you her bust at

the Museum and at the Capitol; and in 1806 the city authorities gave her name to a street. Annually the members of the Academy des Jeux Floraux deliver an oration in her praise. The ancient custom of casting roses on her tomb has given place to the ceremony of proceeding in procession to the Church of the Daurade on the 3rd of May, the day appointed for the distribution of the prizes; — the gold and silver flowers are then deposited on the high altar, in order that they may receive the blessing of the Church; after which ceremony they are carried with much pomp through the principal streets, including that named after Isaure, to the Capitol, where the prizes are given to the authors of the best poems or essays on subjects previously made public by the Academy. The custom of requiring the fortunate recipients of the flowers to leave their prizes for one year in the hands of the Academy enables you to see them. They are seven in number, six being given for composition, — and one as a prize of encouragement. The gold flowers are worth 500 francs each, and those of silver 100 francs.

The Academy contains among numerous busts one of André Bernard, an Augustin monk He was a native of Toulouse; and according to an inscription on the pedestal, was crowned Poet Laureate by

Henry VIII. of England. Toulouse is still noted for its poetical citizens and patronage of poetry, facts gracefully referred to by Victor Hugo, in the lines,—

> Toulouse la Romaine, où, dans des jours meilleurs,
> Je cueillis, tout enfant, la poésie en fleurs.

On the way back to my hotel I visited the Couvent de l'Inquisition, a gloomy building adjoining the Place de Salin. Here the Inquisition was established in the reign of Louis XI., who, perhaps, thought that by arming the church with fresh powers he increased his title to be called saint. In this obscure edifice, for apart from its historical associations, the Convent (now devoted to purposes of religious education) has no interest, crafty priests plotted against the Albigenses, one of the earliest sects which opposed the errors of the Romish Church in the south of France. There was a monk of the name of Robert, who took especial delight in persecuting and tormenting Protestants, doing his devilish work so much to the satisfaction of the pope, that he was placed at the head of the Inquisition.

Subsequently another inquisitor of the name of Foulkes inflicted frightful sufferings on the inhabitants of Languédoc suspected of heresy. The torture became at last so fiendishly cruel as to cause

Philippe le Bel to terminate the sanguinary proceedings. Foulkes seems to have been anxious to make Toulouse as celebrated for *autos da Fé* as Spain. These took place in the Place de Salin. Hear with what refinement of cruelty poor Calvinists were treated in those days: —

"Le soir du même jour six coupables furent conduis à la place publique, où l'on avait préparé des feux pour les brûler. Il y avait au milieu de chaque bûcher une espèce d'estrade élevée où on les attacha; ensuite on alluma le feu au-dessous d'eux, et les bourreaux, lachant doucement la corde, laissaient couler jusqu'à la hauteur du feu ces misérables pour leur en faire sentir la plus vive impression; puis on les guindait de nouveau en haut, et après leur avoir fait souffrir ce cruel tourment à diverses réprises, on les laissa tomber au milieu des flammes, où ils expirèrent."

The "Holy Office" at Toulouse continued, however, to be in favour at Rome; for Pope Paul IV., as soon as he heard of Philippe le Bel's interference, issued a Bull, establishing the Inquisition at Toulouse on the same model as that in the Holy City. He also appointed Cardinals Chatillon, Bourbon, and Lorraine Presidents, with a right to delegate their power to bishops and doctors in theology.

The immediate object of the Pope's Bull was the suppression of the Calvinists; but it is not a little curious that the love of power, which generally oppresses the weak, should, in this instance, have been the means of shielding the Calvinists from persecution by the Inquisition. For the kings of France became so much alarmed by the rapid increase of ecclesiastical power, particularly when applied through the dark and mysterious workings of the Inquisition, that they would not allow the Pope's Bull to take effect. Protestants were no more tortured by the Inquisition, but religious intolerance did not cease. Toulouse still maintained a kind of intolerant supremacy the more remarkable, seeing that she prided herself on her sanctity.* The Inquisition ceased to exist in 1558: pass over two centuries, and what do we find? Intolerance not only authorised, but commanded by law, as evidenced by one of the most horrible persecutions that has ever disgraced the annals of judicature. I allude to the trial, torture, and execution of Jean Calas. Before I visited Toulouse, I heard that the question of Calas' guilt or innocence had been revived in France, and was the subject of talk in the drawing-

* There is a bas-relief in St. Sernin representing Calvin in the form of a pig preaching from the pulpit. Underneath are the words: "*Calvin le Porc prêchant.*"

rooms of Paris. Zealous Romanists contended that he murdered his son; the others, less bigoted, thought it probable that he had committed this deed, while some were of opinion that the evidence was of a nature requiring his judges to convict him. The story has been often told; but as the reader may have forgotten the harrowing circumstances, the leading features are briefly introduced, in order that he may better understand the spirit of intolerance still rampant in France against Protestants.

Jean Calas was a respectable tradesman, occupying a house at Toulouse, in the Rue des Filatiers. His family consisted of a wife, four sons, and two daughters. He was born in 1698, and was 63 years of age when the tragedy opens. Business prospered, and there was nothing to mar the happiness of the family, who had all been brought up in the Protestant faith, but the conversion of his third son to Romanism. This pained his father; but instead of repudiating his son, he allowed him a handsome allowance. Some time after this event, his eldest son, who had not been permitted to be called to the bar without a certificate that he had confessed to a Romish priest, and who was subject to great fits of depression, committed suicide. When the body was discovered, his unhappy father, desirous that the fact of his son

having died by his own hand should be unknown, ordered all his household to conceal the fact. It would have been easy for him to have proved the suicide, for it was committed in the shop while the family were at supper in a room on the first floor; and the youth was so strong, that it was wholly improbable that his death, which was effected by hanging, was brought about by any other hand than his own. However, Calas determined to shield his son's memory. The law quickly appeared on the scene, and it was particularly unfortunate for the family that its chief representative was a man of the name of David, who seems to have had all the devilish desire of the monk Robert to persecute Protestants. He soon saw that there was a grand opportunity to destroy one Protestant fold at least. In opposition to all justice, Jean Calas was condemned to be tortured and broken on the wheel for murdering his son in order, as was alleged, to prevent him becoming a Romanist, and his family were sentenced to banishment.

The heart-rending details of the agonising tortures inflicted on Calas, and the martyr-like fortitude with which he bore them, are detailed in the 4th vol. of the "Causes Célèbres." His execution followed, accompanied by fresh agony, for although his limbs

were broken in various places, he lingered for upwards of two hours. His butchers then ordered the *coup de grâce* to be given.

The terrible tragedy was soon noised over Europe. Zealous Romanists approved the acts of the law courts of Toulouse, presided over by "Le Procureur de Béelzebub," as Voltaire called David. The brotherhood of the White Penitents celebrated a mass for the soul of the suicide, exhibiting his figure with a palm branch in one hand and a pen in the other, with which, according to the "Penitents," he was to have signed his Protestant recantation; and a report was studiously circulated that Protestants were obliged by their creed to murder their children when they abjured the reformed faith.

On the other hand, however, a large class regarded the legal proceedings with detestation and horror. Among these was Voltaire, and it is a bright spot in the life of that remarkable man, that he devoted his great powers to obtain the reversal of the iniquitous sentence on Calas' family. After excessive and long labour, involving the preparation of voluminous documents, the innocence of Jean Calas was fully established, and the Government granted his family a pension. This took place in 1766, and afforded great joy to all right-thinking and upright persons.

Numerous dramas were written on the subject, and Voltaire's fame was greatly increased. Ten years after the reversal of the sentence, when he was tottering through the streets of Paris followed by an admiring crowd, some one asked the name of the old man. "Ne savez-vous pas," was the answer, "que c'est le sauveur des Calas?" But the triumph of justice was not satisfactory to all. "The Parlement" of Toulouse was not compelled to recognise the reversal of its own judgment, and, true to the spirit of intolerance pervading its members, refused to admit that their sentence was unjust.* This is not surprising, for official bodies rarely like to endorse their own condemnation; but it is surprising and melancholy that persons should not only at that period, when possessed of all the facts enabling them to arrive at a just conclusion, but also now, insist that Calas was justly executed. Ask any Roman Catholic connected with the Church at Toulouse whether Jean Calas murdered his son, and you will be probably told that he did.

Unhappily, the tendency throughout France to persecute Protestants is rapidly increasing, and endeavours are everywhere made to cause them to be re-

* The reversal of the Toulouse judgment had one well-merited effect. Beelzebub's Procureur was so stung with remorse that he died raving mad.

garded with aversion. Within the last few years the Calas tragedy has been resuscitated by writings and speeches emanating from bigoted Romanists, having for their object to show that the Toulouse "Parlement" acted well and wisely in butchering innocent Calas.*

Look, too, at the decrees recently enacted respecting Protestant schools, which have been closed in many Departments by order of Government, "for the sake," as the official order runs, "of the public morals!" As Englishmen we feel too much the value of civil and religious liberty to remain silent when attempts are made to fetter our Protestant brethren, and it is our bounden duty to lift up our voice on every occasion against a system of oppression which, if not checked, may lead to another Bartholomew massacre.

* See, for a masterly refutation of these mischievous proceedings, "Jean Calas et sa Famille, Étude Historique d'après les Documents originaux. Par A. Coquerel Fils, Pasteur de l'Église Réformée de Paris. Paris, 1858."

CHAP. XX.

Tremendous Thunder-storm. — Effect of the Lightning. — A Plague of Insects. — Journey to Foix. — A quarrelsome Officer. — Foix. — Picturesque View. — The Eastern Pyrenees. — Department of Ariège. — Auriferous Deposits. — Rough Companions. — Sketching made easy — A courteous Girl — A fairy Dwelling. — The Castle of Foix. — The Counts of Foix. — Gaston Phœbus. — A mighty Hunter. — Femmes Assises. — Quaint Houses. — Ussat — Extortionate Landlord. — The Thermal Springs. — The Val d' Ussat. — Tarascon. — Vast Caves. — Mont Soudoure. — St. Barthélemy.

THOUGH a city of abundance, Toulouse is not a desirable abiding place. The streets are swept by gusts of wind, which raise dense clouds of dust, driven from the sandy plain, rendering the atmosphere as dark as that of London during a fog. Thunder-storms of tremendous intensity are also very prevalent. While sketching one morning under the wall of a desecrated church, I was almost knocked over by a thunder clap of such terrific violence that for the moment I imagined that all the artillery in the garrison, including the powder magazine, had exploded simultaneously. The phenomenon was not, however, very distant; for I heard from some officers at the table d'hôte break-

fast, that the lightning had struck the corner of a building in the barrack-yard, close to where I was sketching. The heat during summer is far more congenial to insects than to human beings. The former abound and are of many varieties. The brilliant cafés in the Place du Capitole were filled at night by what Cuvier would have called an *effroyable richesse* of elegant white moths, which hurrying to destruction in the numerous gas jets literally covered the floor with their singed remains.

So, curiosity being satisfied, I longed to be amidst the mountains again; and, having despatched my heavy luggage by rail to Narbonne, left Toulouse in the evening for Foix, in a diligence that must have been built in the days of our forefathers. I had engaged a place in the coupé, and, as this was far from commodious, I was somewhat anxious to ascertain who were to be my companions for the night. A gentleman was already seated in one corner, and an officer in a travelling-cloak occupied the other. The prospect was not pleasant, for the latter was smoking a colossal cigar of very bad tobacco. Apprehensive that he intended smoking through the night, and having a great aversion to tobacco in close quarters, I thought it advisable to protest at once against such a proceeding. Failing in my request to him to desist,

I sought the conductor, and desired him to forbid smoking in the coupé. I had scarcely uttered the words when out jumped the warrior in great wrath, and an altercation ensued, which made me think that he was desirous to use a sharper instrument than his tongue. I adhered, however, to my resolution to have no smoking in the coupé, and the officer's wrath at last subsided to indistinct growls, in which he indulged through the night.

After much shaking, and a very disagreeable journey, the crazy diligence, somewhat to my surprise, deposited me safely at Foix, at the cold and dreary hour of 4 A.M. With difficulty, for it was still dark, I found the Hôtel du Rocher de Foix, roused a slumbering garçon by vigorous kicks at the door, and a few minutes after was in a very large bed in a very large mysterious-looking room, where I soon fell asleep.

When I awoke, what a change had a few hours made!—brilliant sunshine flooded the apartment, and casting open the windows, I beheld, the picturesque castle of Foix, with its lofty donjon tower, perched on a rock immediately opposite; below, quaint old buildings, clustering between the rock and the brawling river Ariège; while behind, stretching far as the eye could see, rose the lofty range of the Eastern Pyrenees.

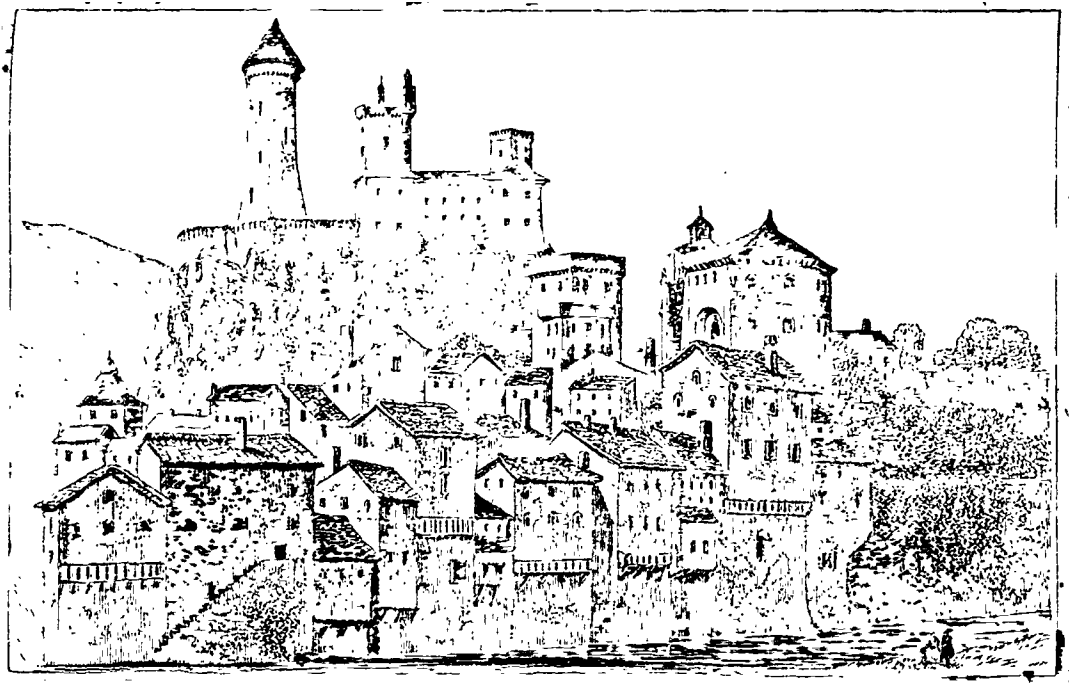
The department of which Foix is the chief town is named from the river Ariège, or Oriège (Aurifera) as it was anciently called on account of the gold found in the detritus, for the most part between Campugnac and Foix. A sufficient quantity of the precious metal was extracted from the river in the middle of the past century, to give employment to numerous gold-seekers. A French writer on the mineral wealth of the Pyrenees, in the early part of this century, says: "Cet or est à 22 to 23 karats; on le vendait autrefois 80 francs l'once à la monnaie de Toulouse, qui en recevait jusqu'à 200 marcs (about 1800 troy ounces) chaque année. Je dis autrefois, parce que les orpailleurs (gold-searchers) sont maintenant (1811) moins nombreux; on parait s'être dégouté d'une profession qui ne produit que 20 à 30 sous par jour, sauf dans des circonstances très rares où quelques ouvriers gagnent beaucoup plus."

There were evidently many subjects for the sketch-book at Foix, but, before opening this, breakfast had to be eaten. This I shared in the society of half a dozen ill-mannered Frenchmen, who being as hungry as myself gave me sharp work to obtain a fair share of the dishes. Modesty in such cases is sure to end with starvation, so you must imitate your neighbours and help yourself.

Breakfast over, I sallied out with my sketch-book, and had just set up my stool in the shade opposite a small house with hanging terraces extending to the river side, when the door opened, and a girl invited me to walk in and make my sketch from her room, the window of which she said commanded a far better view of the castle, than could be obtained where I was. Her manner was so artless and kind, that I accepted her offer, and following her up stairs, entered her apartment, in which she left me to follow my pursuit.

It was a charming little room furnished with exquisite taste, and so delicately and ingeniously was it made to do double duty, that but for a snow-white coverlid, seen between the openings of pink muslin curtains, you would never have guessed that a bed occupied one corner of the apartment. The fair owner of this fairy-like dwelling was right; the view from her window was superior for artistic purposes to that below, embracing a wider range of quaint buildings and Pyrenean heights. Selecting the most picturesque scene, which included the castle, I set to work, and while engaged with the pencil, let me say a few words respecting this building.

The castle of Foix was the stronghold of those redoubtable counts, who signalised themselves by their



valour and love for fighting in the middle ages. The building was originally of great strength, resisting more than one attempt to destroy it. And, although modern innovation has, by turning vaulted halls and dungeons into a county prison, done much to injure its former picturesque appearance, yet the three remaining towers, one of which is 136 feet high, attest the former strength of the castle.

The county of Foix was but small, the length being fifty miles, and the breadth about thirty-five. This territory was not likely to satisfy the bold and rapacious lords of Foix. Other lands were acquired by conquest, and we find several of the counts holding high offices, by virtue of their possessions, under the French crown. Gaston III., surnamed Phœbus from his personal beauty, was one of the most famous of these petty sovereigns. Vainly proud of his *sobriquet* he assumed the sun for his armorial bearings. Froissart states, that he was an accomplished, brave, and magnificent prince, "modèle des héros du 14ième siècle." True to his blood he loved fighting, and next to this the chase. Saint You, tells us that he kept 1600 dogs, and a great number of huntsmen. He wrote a book in eighty-five chapters, entitled "Phœbus sur la Chasse des Bestes Sauvages et des Oyseaux de Proys." In this work he treats of

the habits of wild animals and the pleasure of hunting them. Nothing he declares is so likely to keep a man from mortal sins, as following the chase, and he adds, "Qui fuit les sept pechiez mortel, selon nostre foy doist estre saulvé: Doncques bon veneur aura en ce monde joye, est après aura paradis." A gallant sight truly must it have been, to see this warrior hunter issuing from his castle with his mounted huntsmen and his troops of dogs; or, passing down the course of years, picture his successors, all with few exceptions valiant knights, who went forth from those grey ruins to do battle, or defended their rock-perched eyrie from frequent assaults.

These historical associations invest the Castle of Foix with great interest, and, long after the stronghold became a ruin, the house of Foix was famous in the roll of French aristocracy. On the accession of Louis XIII., the privilege of sitting in the royal presence was only accorded to duchesses, who were thence called *femmes assises*. But this raised such a commotion among the French nobles, that the liberty to be seated was subsequently extended to the wives of other members of the aristocracy, among whom was the wife of the representative of the house of Foix.

My sketch being finished, I was musing abstract-

edly over the various fortunes of the old castle, when merry laughter outside the door recalled me from the past to the present; and I felt that it was time to surrender possession of the room so kindly placed at my service. Opening the door, I saw the owner sitting with some half-dozen girls at the head of the stairs. Had she repented her courtesy to the stranger, and gathered these girls around her as a safeguard? Not so, — at least her kind manner was unchanged; and, having thanked her for her hospitality, I bade her farewell, assuring her that her fairy bower and hanging gardens would always be associated with my remembrances of Foix.

If neither a sketcher nor curious in the mysteries of old buildings, Foix will not tempt you to remain in it long. A French writer says,—"Rien n'y manque à Foix pour en faire un lieu d'exil." Being, however, a great lover of such structures, when embodying picturesque forms, I spent a very pleasant day in the town, notwithstanding certain unpleasant odours which were very sensible in the narrow streets. The following morning, I hired a small open carriage, and was driven by a wild boy up the Valley of the Ariège to the Bains d'Ussat, thirteen miles from Foix.

Here my ill star directed me to a hotel on the

left bank of the Ariège, with the high-sounding name of "Le grand Établissement," where I was badly lodged, badly fed, and in all respects badly treated. The landlord, moreover, is extortionate; for, besides charging very high for bad fare, he reckons the days of your arrival and departure as two entire days, although you arrive late at night, and depart early the following morning. I think it right to add, that I successfully resisted this attempt at imposition. There are other hotels on the left bank of the river, which, besides being more cheerfully situated than those on the right bank, are, I believe, moderate in their charges.

Ussat is situated in the gorges of the Pyrenees, high mountains and beetling precipices impend over the hotels and baths, which are built between the base of the cliffs and the river Ariège. 'Tis not exactly the place that you would relish for a summer residence, but, nevertheless, during the season, Ussat is frequented by health-seekers, who hope, by diligent wooing of the Hygeian goddess, to restore constitutions shattered by nervous diseases.

The springs which well out from beneath the limestone are warm, ferruginous, and acidulous. The water is received in marble baths, which are in great request during the early morning hours. In the

absence of fashionable réunions, and other gaieties which characterise Luchon and Bagnères de Bigorre, the visitors at Ussat have no resources to pass the time beyond the excursions which lie around them. These are, however, as numerous as they are varied and beautiful. A path by the river side to Tarascon, abounds with charming scenes, and Tarascon, with its ruined castle commanding the defiles watered by the two branches of the Ariège, which meet beneath its walls, is one of the most picturesque spots in the Pyrenees. The geologist will find much to interest him in the Val d'Ussat. The gigantic limestone buttresses which rise on either side of the defile are honey-combed by vast caves, having the appearance of huge port-holes. These caverns assume all manner of fantastic shapes. The greater part are inaccessible to even the most enterprising mountaineer, a fact which the numerous birds screaming at their mouths seem to be well aware of; a few, however, may be visited by means of narrow paths and ledges fringed by box-trees, which are excellent hold-fasts to the climber of Pyrenean heights. Guided by a boy, and provided with a candle, I explored the largest of these caverns. It lies within the bowels of Mont Soudoure, about two miles from Tarascon, and extends for nearly a mile within the mountain. The

peasants of the Val d'Ussat, who are very primitive, and full of dark superstitions, affirm that the recesses of the Mont Soudoure grotto have never been explored, and that they penetrate the mountain for many miles. The cavern contains numerous stalactites, which are much finer than those found in the small grottoes near Ussat. I also saw traces of iron ore, but it does not exist in this cavern in sufficient quantities to repay the cost of working. On my way back to Ussat, I took a path which led me over the shoulder of one of the spurs of the Labesse range of mountains. At the highest point I obtained a glorious view of the crest of St. Barthélemy, ribbed with glaciers, towering above the surrounding heights.

CHAP. XXI.

Excursion to the Val Vicdessos. — Donkey Riding. —Catching a Horse. — St. Eloi. — Miglos. — Val Siguer. — Mining Population. — Vicdessos. — Dolmen. — Mont Calm. — Sem. — Entrance to the Iron Mines. — Tortuous Passages. — Large Chambers.— Unskilful Mode of Working. — The Rancié Mines. — Excellence of the Ore. — Mining Regulations. — The Jurats — Mode of Smelting. — Catalan Furnaces. — Profits of the Mines. — Return to Ussat.

THE glimpse that I obtained of the portal of the Val Vicdessos from Tarascon, and my wish to see the famous iron mines at the upper end of the valley, led me to devote a day to its exploration. I had some difficulty, however, in carrying my desire into operation, for although there is one vehicle for hire at Ussat, if you purpose riding you will be offered a donkey. Now you may not be too proud, high-minded, or long-legged to ride a donkey at a German brunnen, where mighty Herzogen may be seen bestriding these beasts; but the strongest donkey at Ussat would not carry you from thence through the Val Vicdessos and back again during the longest summer day.

After a long search I succeeded in hiring a horse, not certainly very promising in appearance, but the owner declared that the animal had never been down, and I had great faith in a pair of tolerably sharp spurs which have helped me over many miles of rough roads.

I left Ussat at seven in the morning, and soon after was at the entrance to the Val Vicdessos. The way lies across the bridge of Sabars, at the foot of which there is a small chapel dedicated to St. Eloi, who is believed to take the fraternity of miners, under his special protection, and is their patron saint.

You are soon made aware of being in a mining district by continually meeting carts and mules laden with iron ore, on their way to furnaces near Tarascon. About three miles beyond the entrance the valley contracts, and I entered the mountain gorges. Presently a turn in the road opened a charming ruined castle, flanked with towers, perched on a great rock buttress. Some miners, whom I questioned, called it Miglos, but were ignorant of its history, though I must confess that had their archæological attainments been of the highest order, my inability to understand their patois would not, I fear, have enabled me to enlighten you on the subject.

Beyond the castle I came to the mouth of the Val Siguer, which loses itself in the roots of the moun-

tains commanding the Val d'Andorre. The country now opens; trees are more numerous; old castles frequent; the Ariège drives many water wheels, and you are amidst a large mining population. Large only, however, by comparison, for you must not suppose that the villages and hamlets in the Val Vicdessos are like the swarming hives in our iron mining districts.

Presently I came to the village of Vicdessos, about eleven miles from Ussat. I left my horse at the little inn, where, by the way, there are two good bedrooms, and engaged a boy to pilot me to the principal iron mines situated on the slopes of Mont Rancié. The way lies over a kind of col, on the summit of which I was surprised to see a large druidical dolmen, consisting of a granite slab seventeen feet long, by fourteen feet broad, supported by limestone rocks. The locality was well chosen for religious rites, as the dolmen can be seen from a very wide circuit. The views from this col to the south are extremely grand, comprising a vast range of mountains dominated by snow-draped Mont Calm.

After walking about two miles, we came to Sem, a village inhabited almost exclusively by a mining population, whence a steep road leads up to the mines. Troops of mules were passing up and down;

those from the mines laden with iron ore. Old women drove, or rather attempted to direct the beasts, whose ways were so erratic as they came half jumping, half sliding down the mountain, that I was obliged to keep a keen look-out as I toiled up the steep.

Presently we came to an assemblage of stone huts, in which the ore is deposited as it is brought out of the mines. Close to these huts is the mouth of the principal gallery, for there are seven other entrances at various heights on the face of the mountain. My advent drew a crowd of dusky miners round me, eager to act as guides; but, before I had time to make a selection, an overseer accosted me, and offered to show me the mines. Provided with lamps formed of an iron cup depending from a long handle, and accompanied by a miner, we passed along a gallery, ascended to another by a very wet and slippery path, and, after many turnings, entered a large chamber. Here miners were working, picking out the ore from fissures in the limestone, while others were carrying the mineral in baskets to the huts outside the mine. From this chamber we groped to another deeper in the mountain, and then passed through a series of narrow passages into a vast hall no longer worked. From this we emerged into another gallery leading to

a kind of bridge spanning what must be a deep gulf in the limestone formation, for stones cast down rattle long in the depths before they subside to rest. Beyond the bridge more levels, galleries, chambers and miners, but all so like each other that I cried enough, and was glad, after an hour's subterranean wanderings, to emerge again into daylight.

The absence of all those contrivances adopted in well-worked mines, by which steam is made as far as possible to do manual labour, gives the visitor to the Rancié mines the impression confirmed by fact that they are worked in a most unscientific manner. My guide showed me the ruins of chambers which have collapsed for want of proper supports. A few years ago the mouth of a gallery became choked, seventy miners were suddenly imprisoned, and only rescued after superhuman exertions. The results of this unskilful mode of proceeding are now becoming apparent. In an account of the Rancié mines written in 1813, the author says:—"Quoique les mines de Sem soient ouvertes depuis plus de cinq siècles, et que l'on en retire chaque année plus de 400,000 quintaux de mineral, on les exploite toujours avec le même succes. La montagne de Rancié peut être regardée comme inépuisable."

Now a very different story is told, and it is doubtful if the mines will hold out until the end of this century. This is the more to be regretted, as the ore is excellent, yielding 40 to 55 per cent. of iron, and is pronounced by French metallurgis's as "fort nerveux, malleable, ne cassant, ni a chaud, ni a froid."

The mines were formerly worked by the inhabitants of the Val Vicdessos, by virtue of long-standing charters, which gave them communal privileges. But, as these privileges led to much misunderstanding and fierce quarrels, for Pyrenean miners are not sucking doves, the French Government interposed, and took the management of the mines into their own hands. Inspectors (*Jurats*) were appointed to regulate the miners and their labours, and some attempt at least was made to work the mines in a less dangerous manner than heretofore. The Rancié miners have always been extremely superstitious, and it was their custom, on the occurrence of any accident, though arising entirely from carelessness, to suspend work and pray to their patron saint.

The Jurats, four in number, who are under the superintendence of the Mayor of Sem, enact local mining laws, sell the ore, and manage the mines. An able miner earns about 1*s.* 7*d.* a day; and a good iron furnace in full blast, employing eight men to feed

it, and 112 cutting wood, making charcoal, and carrying fuel and ore to the furnace realizes, after paying all expenses, an average annual profit of 7800 francs.

The furnaces, which are constructed on the 'Catalan' principle, though rude in appearance, perform their work well. They are about eight feet high, three in diameter, and the walls are ten inches thick. The ore is broken by hammers moved by water power, alternate layers of ore and charcoal are placed in the furnace, and the blast is derived from wooden cylinders fitted with pistons, also worked by water power. In about six hours, the furnace is ready to be tapped.

The great expense consists in carting the ore and charcoal to the furnaces, for I was told that when the mine and forest were in close proximity to the furnace, 25,000 francs have been realized in one year. But the forests are now very distant, and would have disappeared entirely before this had not a law been enacted about a dozen years ago for the preservation of certain timber districts, and the creation of new forests.

After partaking of a slight repast at Vicdessos — avoid the wine — I mounted my horse, and regained Ussat in time for the table d'hôte dinner.

CHAP. XXII.

Leave Ussat. — Cabannes. — Castle of Lordat. — Ax. — Remarkable Springs. — Geology of Ax. — The Leper's Bath. — Parboiling Fowl. — Official Medical Report of Ax. — The Visitors. — Rough Company. — Game. — Charming Scenery. — The Mantis. — Fashionable Promenade. — Engage a Muletcer. — Theatrical Performance.

I JOURNEYED the following morning in a charabanc to Ax, stopping — which you should not fail to do — at Cabannes, to visit the grand ruined Castle of Lordat, the largest in the Eastern Pyrenees. 'Tis a stiff climb to the rock crest on which the castle is built, but the view alone more than repays for the labour of the ascent. The valley, for many miles up and down, is visible; for those old robber knights were careful to build their eyries so that no traveller should be able to pass near them unseen. From the valley, Lordat gives you no idea that it was formerly of such strength as to defend the pass into Catalonia, but when you stand amidst the shattered walls and crumbled towers, you become aware, by the great extent of the ruin, of the former strength of the place.

Nature has been kind to the wreck, wreathing walls and towers with lovely creepers, and gemming the ground with innumerable wild flowers. Among these I recognised the lovely oxalis, found generally only on lofty mountain heights. In the Alps, the peasant has named this flower "Pain du bon Dieu," from the supposed resemblance of the blossom to manna.

If "Castle mad" you will find more picturesque ruins of these relics of the middle ages between Cabannes and Ax, each crowning some lofty rock, and set in the midst of charming scenery. In fact the entire drive through the Val d'Ariège, presents a succession of surprises which may be said to reach their culminating point when a sudden turn of the road discloses Ax surrounded by mountains, some of which are pine clad, and all grand in form and glorious in colouring.

Having secured a comfortable room at the Hôtel Sicre, the best of the two hotels at Ax, for which and board I was only charged six francs a day, I went out to see the lions of the place.

Ax, 2454 feet above the sea, is one of the most remarkable thermal sites in the Pyrenees. The valley is literally a vast boiling cauldron; the last official medical report states that there are eighty-four warm sulphurous springs, and you have only to bore a hole in

the ground to obtain hot water. The junction between the limestone-slate and the great granitic chain, which rises immediately to the east of Ax in huge mountain masses, forming the geographical axis of the Pyrenees, occurs precisely in the centre of the town. The temperature of the springs varies from 151° to 168°. The remarkable fact has been noticed that the quantity of water discharged by some of the springs, increases about one-twelfth during May, and falls to the usual average in June.

My wanderings led me in the first instance to a large square tank filled with steaming water, strongly impregnated with sulphur. This, in the middle ages, when according to Sprengel there were 2000 Lepers' Hospitals in France*, was the Lepers' Bath, the name the tank still bears. A large building, somewhat modernised, now used as an infirmary, is said to have been the Lepers' Hospital. According to my observation, the principal use now made of the bath, is to scald pigs and rid poultry of their feathers and fleas. Dozens of fowls, with their legs tied, were undergoing the latter process; evidently, from their convulsive cackling, very much to their dissatisfaction, for they were immersed and held in the hot water by women until their heads only remained visible; but, accord-

* Histoire de la Médecine.

ing to one woman, they are very comfortable after the parboiling, when it does not last too long, and are greatly improved for the table. This, I fancy, is the main consideration.*

If the numerous springs which cause Ax to resemble a seething cauldron were in the Western Pyrenees they would be visited by a much larger and very different class of persons to that now seen at this secluded Brunnen. Yet Ax has many *agrémens*. Hear what the official Medical Report says: —

"Les sources d'Ax sont les plus nombreuses, les plus variées, les plus riches de France. Le site dans lequel elles sourdent est des plus remarquables. Les montagnes qui les avoisinent sont les plus hautes et les plus belles de toute la chaine des Pyrenées. La nature s'y montre sur une diversité d'aspects et une splendeur de végétation qui enchantent les regards. Fondés en l'an 1260 après les Croisades, les Thermes d'Ax sont, depuis 600 ans, en pleine possession de la confiance publique."

But Ax is not easy of access, and being situated in a

* Ax is not the only brunnen provided with a pig and fowl bath. Plombières is said to derive its name from *plumaria* or plumières; in other words stripping fowls of their feathers, which operation is still performed in a tank; and at Arles there is a 'Bain des Cochons,'

cul de sac, for the carriage road only extends a few miles beyond the town, up the Val d'Ariège, it can only be reached by one route. Diseased Toulousians avail themselves of the curative powers of the waters, but you will not see Parisians, and I was informed that English are never found among the visitors. The season lasts until the end of September. About sixty guests sat down to the table d'hôte at the Hôtel Sicre, for the most part men who fed voraciously, for invalids — sat through the dinner with their hats on; talked loud and coarsely; spat much, and were in short far from agreeable company. *Apropos* of the dinner, I may mention that monster dishes heaped with quails made their appearance and quick disappearance daily. There were at least 100 of these birds each day on the table, and being highly appreciated by the guests were generally plucked from the dishes by finger agency. These birds abound, as I was informed, on the hills and valleys near Ax. Izzards are also numerous on the high mountains, so that the sportsman will find work for his gun in this part of the Pyrenees.

The day after my arrival at Ax being Sunday, I devoted the morning to a ramble on the slopes of the neighbouring mountains. Pines, which are rare in the Eastern Pyrenees, clothe many of the heights round Ax. The scenery is extremely beautiful. Sel-

dom have I seen more charming combinations of water, rocks, hills, and mountain-crests, glittering with snow and glaciers, than are to be found within a few minutes' walk of Ax. The landscape sketcher, fondly acquainted with mountain scenery, will find much to delight him here. While rambling on the skirts of the wood, I met with that curious and rare insect the praying mantis, so called from a peculiarity which it has of erecting the thorax at an angle with the body, and placing the long fore legs in a kneeling attitude. But in truth the habits of this mantis are very much opposed to gentleness or meekness, for the insect, which is about an inch and a half long, is a most voracious animal, slaughtering and eating his smaller brethren by wholesale, whenever they come in his way; and the attitude he assumes is simply the preliminary process of giving his victims a death squeeze between the powerful forceps terminating his fore feet. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the transparent delicate green wings which arch the body of this handsome insect, and it is perhaps from its lovely aspect, as well as from its praying attitude, that the Africans superstitiously believe that any person on whose head the mantis alights is sacred.

When I returned to Ax in the afternoon, I found the little town wearing a holiday aspect. The pro-

menade — for Ax has a promenade, and a charming one too by the side of the rapid Ariége, shaded by fine sycamores — was crowded by the provincial visitors, who took evident pleasure in displaying exaggerated specimens of Parisian fashions.

After dinner the landlord, to whom I had communicated my wish to cross the mountains to Puicerda in Spain, sent me a muleteer, half French and half Spanish, conversant with both languages, and master of half a dozen mules, with whose assistance he carried on a trade which I suspect flourished better when uncontrolled by custom-house laws. He was going as far as the frontier on the following day, and after much talking agreed, for the consideration of ten francs a day, and five for the "retour," to give me a riding mule and act as my guide to Puicerda, and from thence over the Col de la Perche to Mont Louis. As usual with mountain guides, he wanted me to start at a very early hour, but I made a compromise between night and morning, and we parted with the understanding that he was to have the mules at the door of the hotel at 6 A. M.

In the evening there was a theatrical performance in a vast loft over stables. The prices of admission were one franc, 50, and 25 centimes, and the entertainment drew a numerous though not a fashionable audi-

ence. The seat of honour was reserved for the landlady of the Hôtel Sicre. She was escorted to her place by two bearded cavaliers, who smoked furiously during the performance. The play was a vaudeville in which two actors and one actress performed. The scenery was of the Pyramus and Thisbe school, the audience being required to draw largely on their imaginations. This perhaps was the more easy, as the lighting was effected by six dips, and the orchestra was composed of one fiddle and a clarionet. During the performance an animated conversation was kept up between the audience and the principal actor, who was a fellow of considerable humour. Altogether it was a very diverting performance, and had the merit of not being too long.

CHAP. XXIII.

Across the Mountains. — Spanish Muleteers. — Royal Mules. — Mont de Mure. — Grand Mountains. — The Col de Merens. — Savage Scenery. — Merens. — Passport Difficulties. — An enraged Belgian. — Under Arrest. — A Friend in Need. — Liberated. — Hospitalet. — Night Quarters. — Economical Soup. — A Skin of Wine. — How to make a Fortune in the Eastern Pyrenees.

SHORTLY after six the following morning I was in the saddle, mounted on a tall strong mule, whose head was almost concealed by those gay trappings and bells with which Spanish muleteers love to decorate their mules.

It is curious how little the fashion of these conceits has changed since the days when mules carried royal merchandise for the kings of France. Coryat met a troop of these beasts in the South of France laden with goods, and he describes them having "little things made of osier-like baskets hung to their mouths, in which they put hay for them to eat as they travel. On their foreheads they have three pieces of plate, bearing the king's arms; also they have pieces of

pretty coloured cloths hanging from the middle of their foreheads down to their noses, fringed with long fair fringes and many tassels bobbing about them." *

My guide, attired in a semi-Spanish costume, walked, and three mules laden with well-filled bags, went before us. The morning was delicious; a slight autumnal temperature crisped the air, but the sun, which fired the pine tops on the mountain crests, gave promise that as the day advanced summer would be again with us. About three miles from Ax the road, thus far practicable for stout springed vehicles, contracts to a mule path, and we entered the gates of the mountains. Two miles further the gorge through which we had defiled by the side of a brawling stream, one of the head waters of the Ariège, expanded, and we came upon the flank of the Mont de Mure, over which our route lay. The pines were now left behind, and we entered upon a savage and desolate stony mountain tract, not however without beauties to those who have an eye for fine forms and exquisite tints. For the mountain masses are very grand, those in the distance being snow-capped. Who can describe the glory of these elevations, what painter can limn them? "Turner," says his eulogist,

* Crudities hastily gobbled up in five months Travells in France, &c.

"felt that amongst the highest hills no work could be done, and although in one or two of his vignettes, he shows his knowledge of them; his practice was always to treat the snowy mountains merely as a far away white cloud, concentrating the interest of his picture on nearer and more tractable objects." *

The Col de Merens, which we were now crossing, is 6,345 feet above the sea. No snow lies on its summit, excepting in early spring and during autumn and winter. The descent to the village of Merens occupied two hours. As we drew near the small and wretched hamlet, I observed a person surrounded by three gensdarmes, and probably the entire population of the place. He was in a state of great excitement, speaking loud, and gesticulating violently; on a nearer approach it was evident that he was very angry with the gensdarmes. The cause of his wrath was soon explained. When within a few feet of the group a gendarme advanced and seized the bridle of my mule while another demanded my passport. This was immediately produced. The document emanated from the Foreign Office, and bore the signature of Lord Palmerston. The three officials examined the well-worn sheet very minutely, and then told me that my

* Modern Painters, vol. iv. p. 246.

passport was perfectly worthless—that I must consider myself under arrest, and that I should have to return to Foix to give an account of myself to the Prefet at that place.

As this retrograde movement would have been fatal to my travelling plans, I vehemently protested against such a proceeding, asserting that my passport was in all respects authentic, that with it I had travelled through various parts of France and the Continent without hindrance, and that very recently it had been examined and approved by the authorities at Bayonne. But all my eloquence was of no avail, back to Foix I must go. "Ah! then," broke in the gentleman whose anger had been temporarily lulled while my passport was under examination, "we will go together." "Not if I can help it" was my reply. Companions in misfortune soon become acquainted. In a very short time I learned that the gentleman, who was a Belgian, had left Ax with a guide in the morning before me,—that his passport, which he declared to be *en régle*, was not considered to be so by the gensdarmes, and that he had been during the last hour inveighing against the injustice of being detained, until he had lost his temper,—a fact sufficiently apparent by his flushed face and excited state.

As for my passport, it was evident that beyond the

word "Victoria" the gensdarmes could not decipher one word, and although I translated it at their request, taking care to give a very free translation to the words "pass freely,"—my pains were thrown away. They had never seen such a document before, they doubted its genuineness; and moreover, the law, according to their notion, required that every traveller in France should be provided with a passport in the French language.

Such being their belief, it was evident that there was little chance of setting them right respecting the passport regulations of foreign countries:—though by this time, if they are still worrying travellers at Merens—and I wish them no greater punishment than being stationed at that miserable place,—they have probably had a little official information imparted to them respecting English Foreign Office passports.*

Still, it will be admitted that our prospects,—for now I include my Belgian companion in misfortune,—were none of the brightest, and I began to scrutinise the houses, apprehending that we should have to stay at Merens until the Prefet at Foix could be communi-

* These facts attest how rarely the Eastern Pyrenees are visited by our countrymen, and suggest the desirableness, when a tour is contemplated in untravelled districts, of having a French translation of the passport annexed to the document.

cated with,—for back to that town I was firmly resolved not go, unless force was used.

Such was the state of affairs when a fresh face appeared on the scene. This was the chef of the custom-house officers, who had just arrived from Ax to make his weekly inspection. Having learned the subject of dispute, he requested to look at my passport, and fortunately, being master of a little English, and having previously seen a Foreign Office passport, he at once pronounced mine to be perfectly genuine, and told the gensdarmes that if they detained me they would assuredly get into trouble. "Besides," he added, "you must see," pointing to me, "that this is an English gentleman travelling for his pleasure, and not an Italian or French refugee." Of this probably they still had doubts, for they had stopped a traveller only a few weeks before who turned out, as they said, to be a refugee, and they had since received especial instructions to exercise great vigilance. However, after more words and long deliberation, they relaxed: the head of my mule was released, and I was allowed to depart. But I did not go until the Belgian had also obtained his freedom, not granted, by the way, without grave doubts; then, bidding adieu to the men-at-arms, we filed out of Merens. In the excitement of argument my companion had dismounted from his

mule, and the animal, being under no control, had walked on towards Spain, glad, probably, to get as much of his journey over as possible without the incumbrance of the Belgian, who was a very corpulent man. When we had proceeded about a couple of miles we overtook the beast, and my companion having regained his saddle, we pursued our way. This we found would be common to us both for many days, so we resolved on fraternising, and I do not think that either of us had cause to regret the resolution.

Although our little adventure at Merens did not terminate with the threatened march back to Foix, it was productive of inconvenience to us. Upwards of two hours had been spent in hot argument with the gensdarmes, and thus, when we arrived at Hospitalet, where we had proposed dining while the mules rested, the afternoon was far advanced. Accordingly we thought it wiser to sleep there than run the chance of being benighted before we could reach Tour de Carol. Hospitalet, though smaller than Merens, boasts a better inn, or auberge rather, being much frequented by muleteers passing between France and Spain, who doubtless prefer the place on account of its not being occupied by douaniers or gensdarmes. Fortunately, the only bed-room in the auberge which

contained two beds was unoccupied, and after a few changes in the furniture department, we made it do duty as salle-à-manger as well as dormitory. The landlady assured us that we should be very comfortable in the kitchen, but the smell of garlic was too potent for us even to eat there. Earnestly requesting that this bulb might not enter into any dishes intended for our consumption, we bade the landlady exhaust the resources of her larder and cuisine. The result was highly satisfactory. First we had a capacious bowl full of hot milk, spiced and salted, which did duty as soup, and was, I apprehend, better than the provincial *sopàs a l'aigo**, which we declined. The milk was followed by a dish of mountain burn trout, and then came the pièce de résistance in the form and proportions of a quarter of izzard, which the landlady's son had shot on the neighbouring mountains. To this succeeded omelettes without garlic; cheese rather goaty, but not bad — good bread, and delicious Spanish red wine, poured from a goat-skin bag into a large jug, which was more than once replenished.

* As the economical housekeeper may like to know how this is made, here is the recipe. To four quarts of boiling water, add slices of black bread, two ounces of lard, and a pinch of salt. N. B. Peasants in easy circumstances add rancid oil and garlic, which are said to improve the flavour. With these additions the concoction is called *sopas a l'oillie*.

Indeed, so good, pure, and fruity was this wine, that as the evening was very chilly, I proposed to my friend that we should draw near the wood fire, now blazing cheerfully, and discuss another jug in good English fashion, to which he willingly assented; and although our wine vessel was rough, and mugs took the place of wine glasses, the unadulterated grape juice was fully appreciated.

My companion, who became very communicative as the night advanced, informed me that he was travelling through the Eastern Pyrenees for the purpose of visiting the mineral springs, many of which are only partly used, while others run entirely to waste. He did not conceal that his object was to turn his information to account, and he had stupendous visions of gigantic thermal establishments, rivalling those at Luchon and Bagnères de Bigorre, which would realise large annual profits.

From mineral waters we turned to politics, which we discussed with no apprehension of being within earshot of gensdarmes; and having settled the affairs of Europe to our satisfaction, turned into bed.

CHAP. XXIV.

An Early Start. — Port de Puy Maurins. — Val d'Andorre. — Val Carol. — Charlemagne. — Steep Descent. — Baby Rivers. — Valley of La Cerdagne. — Industrious Peasants. — Porta. — Tour de Carol. — Corbassil. — Rough Fare. — Inns in the Eastern Pyrenees. — Transformation of the Guide. — A Fête in prospect. — Enter Spain. — Spanish Officials. — Bribery and Corruption. — Moral Ophthalmia. — Approach to Puicerda. — Execrable Road. — Puicerda. — The Posada. — Poor Accommodation. — Ancient Church. — The Barracks. — The Plaza. — Sketching Difficulties. — Spanish Cerdana. — Noisy Catalans. — Itinerant Minstrels.

YOUR lofty mountain guides are cruel sleep-breakers. With the dawn our two fellows were thundering at the door, assuring us that if we intended sleeping in Spain that night, it was time to be up and off. Softly, softly! These mountaineers are always very anxious to start at unnecessarily early hours; and so, despite their eloquence, we did not hurry ourselves, believing, from what the landlady said, that we had ample time before us; nor would we depart without a bowl of hot coffee. This drank, we mounted, and were soon out of Hospitalet. Our route lay through

a narrow valley, chaotic with rocks of all forms and sizes, which had fallen from the mountains on the right and left of our path. Presently we began to ascend the crest of the great Pyrenean chain, and after about three hours' climb, came to a temporary rest on the summit of the Port de Puy Maurins. This crest seems the natural geographical boundary between France and Spain, but national power, which frequently o'erleaps Nature's barriers, has pushed the empire of France considerably farther south, and you have to travel many miles before the confines of that country are reached. Not far from the summit of the Col, a path diverging to the right leads into the Val d'Andorre, that curious little republic which, too poor and wretched to be an object of national desire, has not been invaded or disturbed by France or Spain for six centuries. You may look into the portal of its valleys without, I venture to say, having any desire to penetrate its sterile depths.

Far below the crest of the Port de Puy Maurins stretches the fertile valley of Carol, a name suggestive of that grand old Teuton, Charlemagne, after whom the valley is called. The rear army of that emperor was cut off on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees on his return from attacking the Moors, and a curious ruined tower, perched on a rock in the

Val de Carol, is said to have been wrested from them by the warrior monarch.

Down, down,—oh the fatigue of riding a tall, big-boned muscular mule down a precipitous zig-zag rocky path! Compared to the small and pleasant ponies of the Western Pyrenees, these mules are terribly rough beasts, and the tourist must be very tender-footed, who does not prefer on these occasions leaving his mule to its own devices and walking down the mountain. 'Twas indeed most delightful to stretch the long cramped knees and wander amidst the wild flowers which bloom on the south side of the Port; you may know by their number and beauty that your face is now turned to the South. The bubbling waters too—baby rivers—which burst from the mountain side, are hurrying southward, and will be warmed by Catalonian suns before they merge into the Mediterranean.

My Belgian friend being too fat, was unable to give his legs much walking liberty, but as mine were serviceable for good mountain work, I broke away from men and mules, and went down the steep as inclination prompted. The descent, though effected on the straight line principle, was long and fatiguing, and as I continued to see the bridle road in the valley far beneath, but apparently drew no nearer to it, I was

reminded of the lines known by mathematicians as the asymptotes of the hyperbola, which have the curious property of constantly approximating, and yet never meeting. But I was at length made aware that the mountain curve and the valley line do meet, by finding myself on level ground, by the side of a stream which, having fretted through infancy, was now flowing gently along, fertilising the valley in its course. For here, desolation and sterility give place to fertility. Corn, nearly ripe for the sickle, was abundant; and other crops certified that the soil of La Cerdagne is kind, and the peasants industrious. Nor is their industry confined to agriculture, for during the winter they manufacture large quantities of wool, imported from Spain, into various articles.

Having learned the name of the village where men and mules were to be refreshed, I pushed on past the hamlet of Porta, between the Mont de Mure and the Col Rouge, and presently arrived at the old and picturesque Tour de Carol, which I had ample time to sketch before I was overtaken by my party. About two miles further we came to Corbassil, our halting-place, where our mules fared much better than their riders. The tourist who cannot put up with coarse food, will do well to carry with him, on an excursion through these mountains, something that he can eat,

and that will possess the advantage of not being defiled by garlic. Vent not your anger on the poor publicans in the untravelled Eastern Pyrenees, who only having ostrich-stomach muleteers to feed, are ignorant of the comparatively dainty requirements of many travellers. If their auberges were visited by tourists, the innkeepers would doubtless study their tastes. Do we not find rich repasts on Alpine peaks which a few years ago were the haunts of chamois and eagles? My Belgian friend was the only tourist that I fell in with during my wanderings in the Eastern Pyrenees.

We had eaten our crust, softened in a cup of good wine,—the wine in these parts is generally very good, smacking only, sometimes, a little of the goat-skin,—and began to think it was time to be *en route*, but our guides were not forthcoming. Inquiring for them, we heard that my guide, who was a native of Corbassil, had gone to see his wife and children, and to make sundry little commercial arrangements, probably not quite in accordance with custom-house laws. But he had another purpose; for when he joined us, we scarcely knew him again. In place of his well-worn mountain suit and rough cow-hide sandals, he was attired in a gay Spanish dress, and carried over his shoulder an ample cloak of rich brown cloth. He was

accompanied by a fine boy, about twelve years old, also dressed in his holiday clothes, whom he introduced to us as his son. "And this is my wife," he added, pointing to a buxom woman at his side. Demanding the reason for this sudden transformation, we were informed that on the following day there was to be a great fête on the summit of Mont Odeillo (a lofty mountain in the north of the Cerdagne), in honour of the Virgin, of whom a very holy and highly-venerated image is preserved in a church on the mountain top. At this fête, which is held annually in September, many thousands of persons from the surrounding districts, and even from Cafalonia, are present; and as the locality is not very distant from the direct route between Puicerda, where we proposed sleeping, and Mont Louis, in France, my guide thought that we should like to see the gay doings. He had evidently set his heart on paying his devotions at the shrine of Notre Dame de Font Romeu, and, as his account of the fête promised considerable entertainment, we resolved to be present.

Our order of march had undergone a change. The baggage-mules had been left behind, in charge of my guide's wife, who, he said, was greatly disappointed that circumstances did not allow her to accompany us. The fête was evidently a great object of attraction throughout the Val de Carol. We overtook

several peasants on their way to the holy mountain, their purpose being, in starting thus early, to be present at the morning mass. Their route lay across the French Cerdagne mountains, ours to Puicerda, still down the valley, rich in lovely pastoral scenes, which, after the splintered ruins of the mountain peaks, possess a quiet beauty, at once soothing and charming.

We had ridden about six miles, when our guides, pointing to a small stone pillar on the left of our path, announced that we had entered Spain. Excepting this pillar, which might easily be overlooked, there is nothing to mark the boundary between the two kingdoms. How different to the grand dividing natural walls, which awes by their sublimity, at the Brèche de Roland, or the Port de Venasque. However, we were in Spain, and if any doubt had lingered in our minds it would have been dispelled by the Spanish custom-house and police-station which were before us. The sight of these establishments was not agreeable, for although our passports were good for France, they had not been viséd for Spain. I had omitted, by some strange neglect, to obtain this at Bayonne, and my companion, not purposing to enter Spain, had no authority to enter that country. What was to be done? We could, of course, if not allowed to pro-

ceed to Puicerda, retrace our steps to Corbassil, or sleep at Bourg-Madame within the French territory; but one does not like to be foiled, and we had made up our minds to sup in Spain. Taking council with the guides, they thought that we should not meet with any opposition provided we had no objection to paying our footing—in other words, bribing the two officers, who they felt sure would, for a fee of five francs each, allow us to pass, but not otherwise. To this we made reply that we would willingly pay the money and see whether a five-franc piece would be as effective as the visa of the Spanish Consul. It was arranged that my guide, who spoke Spanish, was to be the bribing agent, and having provided him with the money, we assumed a bold face and pushed on.

Our approach to the police-station had not been unobserved. The officer and his custom-house colleague were out, and when we drew near challenged us. The one demanded our passport, the other expressed a strong desire to see the contents of our bags. My guide now stepped forward and assured the officers that we were gentlemen travelling merely for our pleasure, that our bags contained only the necessary articles for a tour, and that we did not purpose proceeding farther into Spain than Puicerda. The information did not satisfy them, for they again

desired to see passports and bags, upon which my guide drew them aside, spoke gentle words, slipped the broad silver pieces into their hands, and we were free to go where we pleased. "Recent travellers," says the last edition of the Spanish Handbook, "report that bribery is now out of fashion in Spain, and that no money should be offered to *resguardos*, or custom-house officers;" "but," adds the late Mr. Ford, "in my time the grandest panacea was cash, the Oriental backshish, and those who preferred peace to *pesetas*, paid with both hands." Money is, I apprehend, still the *primum mobile* in Spain. "The first thing," said the Duke of Wellington, "that the Spanish invariably want is money, their worship of the Virgin is second to their adoration of Mammon."

My experience at the threshold of Spain confirms these opinions, and I have no doubt that a very sad condition of "moral ophthalmia" may be still induced among Spanish officials by a judiciously administered *gratifica cioncita*—vulgarly a tip.

Shortly after passing the official barrier we saw Puicerda. This town is finely situated at the head of Spanish Cerdana, a valley of great fertility and beauty. The road to the very gates is execrable, a mere watercourse full of deep ruts which would be

fatal to springed vehicles. As we entered the town we were keenly scrutinised by the sentinel on guard, whose hideous yellow uniform denoted him to be a soldier of the line. But although Puicerda is a frontier garrison town, our passports were not demanded, and we passed through the narrow streets to the inn unchallenged. Entering a vast stable crowded with mules, we dismounted, and ascended to the first floor of the *posada*, the rooms on which were disposed round a gallery, from whence you could see the mules and smell the stable. The landlady, who had a smattering of bad French as well as Catalan, was sorry that all her good rooms were engaged. She had, however, two beds left, which were at our service. It was well that our expectations of comfort were moderate, otherwise the reality would have been terribly opposed to the ideal. The said beds were in a little closet on the second floor, having no light beyond that admitted by a very narrow window opening on a gallery corresponding to that on the first floor. The aspect of the dens was far from prepossessing. Besides their excessive dirt and probable occupation by legions of vermin, the ammoniacal smell from the stable was so potent as to make our eyes water. However, there was no choice, so we took possession of

the holes, purposing to spend as few hours in them as possible.

The next consideration was supper, and here our prospects brightened. The landlady, anticipating an influx of guests, had stored her larder well. There were partridges, quail, izzard, trout, and good wine at our service. Ordering a portion of each of these delicacies, we devoted the remaining daylight to a stroll through the town. The houses are all built in the Spanish style, projecting balconies and colonnades being attached to nearly every front. The church is a quaint old building, consisting of three large dimly-lighted aisles, in each of which are several chapels, decorated in a very tawdry manner. Jolly-looking priests, wearing huge shovel hats, passed in and out, whilst others in confessionals were endeavouring to make sins sit light on the uneasy consciences of penitent sinners. Strolling into the barracks, we were invited by an officer to see the soldiers' rooms. These, though large, are badly ventilated and extremely dirty. Puicerda has its *plaza,* a square occupied by the best houses, some of which have fantastic Moorish façades. I attempted to sketch one of these, but had no sooner set up my stool, than I was a marked man. The entire population seemed in a few minutes to have gathered

round me. I have experienced many sketching difficulties, and am not easily deterred from persevering under even formidable obstacles, but there is a limit to endurance, and I confess that I was fairly put to flight by the Puicerdans. Their astonishment at my simple sketching apparatus was only equalled by their curiosity; and although I stood my ground for some time, I was eventually obliged to desist, and, greatly to their disgust, abruptly terminated their entertainment by closing my portfolio and walking away, not however without a great number of followers.

Puicerda suffers by being a frontier fortress. All the houses are huddled within the walls; outside these the views, particularly that commanding the Cerdana Valley, are magnificent. I shall never forget the effect of a sunset over that valley, when the slanting beams fired the crests of the Pyrenees while their breasts were steeped in purple gloom and the vale was bathed in golden light. The Val Cerdana is watered by the river Segre, into which the small streams Raur and Arabo fall just below Puicerda. These rivers, I may mention, for the information of angling tourists, are well stocked with trout, and the country abounds with game.

On regaining the *posada* we found the eating-

room full of noisy Catalans, whose principal amusement seemed to be cracking their thick mule-whips. Sometimes they formed a circle and cracked simultaneously, producing an effect which, in a room by no means large, was not particularly tranquillising. How long they would have continued this pastime I cannot say, had it not happily come to a very sudden temination on the entrance of huge smoking dishes which were set before them, and which, judging by the strong odour, were plentifully seasoned with garlic. Dropping their whips, they fell upon the meat like hungry hounds, and there was little talking until their stomachs were full. Then might be heard cataracts of Catalonian *patois*, increasing in loudness as the wine went round. Presently, however, they departed in a body to a neighbouring *café*, and we were left alone.

The landlady was true to her promise, and my apprehensions that the voracious Catalans had reduced the contents of the larder to a low ebb proved groundless. Besides the stipulated dishes, we were served with an excellent omelet and two varieties of delicious red wine. We wound up our repast by a glass of Curaçoa and a cup of semi-solid chocolate, sipped sitting on the balcony. A couple of itinerant Catalan mu-

sicians sang during the evening various national songs to a guitar accompaniment. Their pleasing performance was, however, very suddenly brought to a close by the whip-crackers, who, having returned from the *café*, quickly put the musicians to flight.

CHAP. XXV.

A wretched Night. — Leave Puicerda. — Font Romeu. — Chemin Libre. — A Water Road. — Col de la Perche. — Bourg-Madame. — Llivia. — St. Santiago. — A dirty Town. — Ascent of Mont Odeillo. — Notre Dame de Font Romeu. — Legend of Notre Dame. — Pilgrims. — Goigs. — Canticles. — Difficult Riding. — Frequent Falls. — Summit of the Mountain. — Remarkable Scene. — Interior of the Church. — The miraculous Image. — Catering for a Meal. — Dance of La Bayes. — Mont Louis. — The Curé's House. — A Mountain Fortress. — Grand Thunderstorm.

"BLESSED be the man," said the immortal Sancho Panza, "who invented sleep." Accursed be the inns, the traveller might add, which are enemies to rest. Our worst fears were realised. What with excessive heat, a terrible compound of smells from stable and kitchen, famishing vermin which feasted well, and the perpetual jingle of the mules' bells, sleep, beyond fitful snatches, during which one dreamt wild unearthly dreams, was out of question. We were glad, under these circumstances, that we had arranged to be off by dawn; and as our guides were not behind the appointed time, we passed out of the

gates of Puicerda as the sun rose over the mountain-tops. Early as was the hour, hundreds of men and women were on their way to Font Romeu, for the most part riding gaily caparisoned mules. Our route to the holy mountain led us along a road called the "Chemin Libre," connecting Puicerda with the small Spanish territory of Llivia, situated within the French frontier. This Chemin Libre suffers by its freedom. Owning no master, the road is entirely neglected. The river Segre, parallel to which it is occasionally carried, takes the liberty of frequently using the road as a watercourse, obliging you either to ride on the banks, or tuck up your legs above the saddle flaps. In two places, where the road crosses the river, the bridges were in ruins. Frail structures had been set up in their place for foot-passengers, over which our guides scrambled, while the brave Belge and myself forded the river, which was up to the saddle-girths.

Beyond the Segre, and on the direct road from Puicerda to Mont Louis by the Col de la Perche, lies Bourg-Madame, formerly called Guingettes d'Hix. This small town acquired its modern name in a curious manner. Shortly after the battle of Waterloo, the Duke d'Angoulême passed though the place on his way from Spain to Paris, when the inhabitants, overjoyed at the fall of Napoleon, obtained permission

from the Duke to allow them to call their town Bourg-Madame, in compliment to the Duke's wife, who, by virtue of her royal rank, was styled Madame.

The situation of Llivia, the ancient Julia Libica, where Santiago first preached the Gospel to the Jews, is very striking, but the town itself is a dung-heap, intersected by cuttings. I never beheld such an accumulation of filth before, and I congratulated myself that I had not to walk through the heaps of disgusting refuse which choked the streets. Evidently no sanitary laws exist at Llivia, but one marvels that some enterprising agriculturist does not utilise the town manure by conveying it to the adjoining fields. You would have thought it impossible that so foul a place could contain a decently-dressed inhabitant, and indeed the majority of the people who came out to look at us were in keeping with the dirt in which they wallowed. But before emerging from the town, we came upon a cavalcade just starting for the fête, among whom were several women dressed in a jaunty Spanish costume, radiant with gaudy colours. So the love for finery among the fair Llivians has not been entirely extinguished by the dirt of their town.

Beyond Llivia, the slopes of Mont Odeillo, up which our path lay, were alive with peasants converg-

ing from all parts to the sacred object of the pilgrimage. Spaniards from Catalonia, who gave us a friendly "Diós guarda" greeting; French from Perpignan, Prades, Hospitalet, Bourg-Madame, and other towns and villages; Republicans from Andorre; all classes, men and women, in a variety of dresses, were toiling up the steep shaly slopes to bend the knee to a little wooden image, believed to be endowed with supernatural powers.

You may be very learned in legendary history, and yet not have heard of Notre Dame de Font Romeu. So, as we are climbing to her shrine, I will in few words relate as much of her history as I could learn, my principal source of information being a curious little book entitled "Pélerinage à Notre Dame de Font Romeu, par Tolra de Bordas," which I purchased in the sacristy of the church on Mont Odeillo. According to this publication, at a period so remote as to be beyond the grasp of history, a herd of oxen, straying from their lowland pastures, discovered a spring near the summit of Mont Odeillo. The herdsman, who had missed his cattle, found them round the spring. The next day a bull strayed, and was discovered kneeling at the brink of the water in a state of great excitement. The second act of the miracle play will be guessed. The ground was searched, and a well-

preserved image of the Virgin found close to the water. The story quickly spread, the church (and now we come to the interest of the story) pronounced the image to be miraculously descended upon earth; processions, in which it formed the principal figure, were organised, and finally, after receiving the adoration of the chief priests of Perpignan, it was conveyed with great pomp and ceremony to the top of Mont Odeillo, where a chapel was erected to receive it.

The pilgrimage to Font Romeu * now became established, and many miracles, said to have been wrought by the little wooden image, spread her fame abroad.

Thus far the legend current throughout Spanish Cerdana, Catalonia, and the Eastern Pyrenees. Casting this back into the darkness from whence it emanates, 'tis certain that as far back as 1525 a chapel existed on Mont Odeillo, where an image of great reputed sanctity was enshrined, and 'tis equally certain that the inhabitants of Odeillo have such a veneration for their supposed miracle-working image, that it is not allowed to remain on the mountain

* The popular derivation of this name is Font, Catalan for fountain, and Romeu, the name of the herdsman; but another derivation is Romeu, the Catalan for pilgrim, equivalent to the Spanish Romero.

during winter when the snow lies deep, but is carried to the village-church in the warm valley, greatly to the comfort of the faithful.

The Roman Catholic Church was not slow in taking advantage of this addition to the already large number of holy images. Buildings were erected on the mountain for resident priests, who were and are still required to say masses, for a consideration. Between the 11th September, 1758, and the 11th May, 1760, "le collecteur de Font Romeu avait perçu les honoraires de 811 messes, dont il avait fait la répartition," and, continues *Le Pélerinage*, from which I quote, "aujourd'hui la dévotion à Notre Dame de Font Romeu s'est accrue à un tel point, que des messes et des neuvaines sont demandées des diocèses voisins et des points les plus éloignés de la France."

As early as 1637, forty days' indulgence was accorded to all persons making a pilgrimage to Font Romeu, and Pope Pius IX. granted plenary indulgence to those partaking the communion on the holy days of St. John the Baptist, the Nativity, the Visitation, and the Assumption. No wonder, with all these attractions, not forgetting the miraculous curative power of Notre Dame, as set forth in the official book by many cases related in the true Professor Holloway

style, that the pilgrimage to the summit of Mont Odeillo is extremely popular.*

The excessive steepness of the mountain is no bar to the pilgrims, but rather kindles and inflames their religious zeal. The pedestrians, though foot-sore and weary, joined heartily in the canticles, or *goigs*, as they are called, which burst forth from time to time from many thousand pilgrims; and although the Protestant could not approve of the superstitious delusion impelling them to worship their great Diana of the mountain, yet it was impossible to see the multitudes swarming up the precipitous slopes, and hear their united voices blending harmoniously, invoking the protection of the beloved Virgin, without emotion.

Their most favourite canticle is too long for insertion; here are, however, a couple of verses with the chorus: —

"En una frena montanya
Del terme de Odelló,
En la terra de Cerdanya
Als confins de Rosselló,
Vas de tots son Venerada,
Com digna Mare de Deu.

* The golden result of the "find" on Mont Odeillo has probably had some weight in the getting up of recent mountain miracles, when the performance is probably expected to be more attractive by the appearance of the Virgin in *propriâ personâ*.

O patrona y advocado
De tot lo poble de Deu,
Ohíunos, Verge sagrada,
Maria de Font-Romeu.

Lo rey eternal de gloria,
Qui de tot temps vos honrá,
Per fer de vos gran memoria,
Vostra imatge revelá,
En la montanya nevada
De aguest Mont-Pirencú.
O patrona," &c.

Up, still up, steeper and steeper; it was no easy matter to stick to the saddle, and more than once my mule was nearly down in his attempts to cross ugly places. Many animals were not so fortunate in keeping their legs; for, although your mountain mule is generally a very sure-footed beast, there are occasions when he will be found tripping. Falls were frequent; but no wonder, seeing that in many cases the mules carried double, and their riders were not of the most delicate mould. It was really surprising that serious injuries did not sometimes result from the sudden manner in which mules and riders bit the dust, or rather rocks, but all within my observation escaped with a few bruises. Doubtless our Lady of Odeillo, who, by the way, seems to have particular compassion on those falling from precipices, house-tops, or horseback, was regarded as the protecting agent.

We had been four hours *en route*, and still the mountain top was above us. Another hour of tough scrambling amidst titanic rocks, and we came upon a vast plateau, clothed by pines, through which we rode for half an hour, and then emerged on an open space. In the middle of this was our goal. The scene was very remarkable. Backed by a natural amphitheatre, dotted by tufts of pines, stood the chapel, built of rough hewn stone, much storm-beaten, about seventy feet long and thirty feet broad. Adjoining were some half-dozen huge barrack-like edifices, erected for the accommodation of pilgrims visiting the church. Round this thousands of peasants were struggling for admission within the sacred precincts, while multitudes who had performed their devotions were dispersed in groups under the trees. Many were dancing vigorously to the music of clarionets and fifes, others gazing wonderingly at the feats of jugglers, or listening to Roussillon ballads. The fête had evidently a two-fold object, and it was hard to say whether the sacred or profane predominated. Later in the day no doubt existed on the subject. About a quarter of a mile from the church, a Calvary has been erected, on the highest peak of the mountain, which is girdled by fine pines. The Calvary is provided with all the prescribed stations,

and is surmounted by a huge cross. These stations were crowded by pilgrims, for, as the Pélerinage says, —"A Font Romeu le culte de la croix et le culte de Marie ont le privilège de se confondre dans la dévotion des fidèles." It is worth the trouble of ascending to the summit of the Calvary for the sake of the glorious prospect. The entire range of the eastern Pyrenees, of which Mont Odeillo is an outlier, dominated by the grand cone-shaped Canigou, is immediately before you, while broad and fertile valleys, dotted with French and Spanish villages, and watered by the Segre and other streams, are spread out map-like beneath.

On regaining the church we availed ourselves of a somewhat diminished pressure to enter the building. The interior reeked with sweltering odours, emanating from thousands of hot and excited peasants, who from early morn crowded the narrow space. The object of adoration stands above the high altar. Access to the image is gained by means of a flight of stone steps springing from within an apse behind the altar. Several minutes elapsed ere we were able to reach the apse, so great was the press of people. These, as they drew near the holy spot, sang, or rather shouted verses of favourite canticles, glorifying the little image. The walls of the church attest how highly the Virgin is

venerated. They are literally covered by all kinds of *ex voto* offerings, some of considerable value. Tresses of hair, sufficient to make the fortune of a wig maker, hang in festoons from the roof and walls; but these, numerous as they are, form but a small portion of the chevelures offered to her Ladyship, by far the largest proportion being "supprimés par respect pour la saintété du lieu." Many of these cheap offerings are worked into ingenious ornaments, and bear inscriptions commemorative of the circumstances under which they were offered. Some whimsical enough: a tradesman, for example, presents all his hair to Notre Dame for having granted his prayer that he might draw a prize in the lottery.

But we have elbowed our way to the upper end of the church, and are swept on with the multitude within the apse and up the steps. At the head of these there is a small dark room crammed to suffocation, and now the struggle to get near the image is fearful. At length, but not before we were half dead with the heat and bad smells, we saw her ladyship's face. She is not prepossessing, but what she lacks in beauty is made up by rich adornments. But we must not criticise the carver of the image too severely, for by dint of the application of thousands of lips, the features of the little lady are, like St. Peter's toe at

Rome, much abraded. The saint's toe has been covered, but Our Lady of Font Romeu not having been provided with a mask to protect her from the rough muzzles of the peasants, wastes away under the multitudinous kisses she receives. All the devotees kiss the image; a space sufficient to allow the head to pass within the altar enables you to take this liberty. The ceremony is accompanied by an oblation cast in a box conveniently placed to receive the alms of the faithful. It is, however, after the grand procession and mass that the great harvest is reaped. Then says the Pélerinage, the priest—"Après une touchante instruction ne saurait négliger de stimuler la libéralité des assistants, dont-il ne tarde pas à parcourir les rangs pour recueillir leurs offrandes."

Our guides were distressed that neither the Belgian nor myself would kiss the image. After so toilsome a journey, and encountering so much inconvenience, 'twas in their opinion a pity not to reap the benefits which would assuredly be ours if we embraced Notre Dame. But the Belgian was a sceptical Roman Catholic, I a Protestant, and so, having satisfied our curiosity, we descended another flight of steps leading to the sacristy. Here a brisk sale was going on of medals, crosses, and scapularies, bearing representations of the Virgin of the Pélerinage.

Heavens! how delicious it was to breathe the pure mountain air after the sudatory process we had undergone. When we had refreshed and purified our lungs, we turned our thoughts to something more substantial in the form of a breakfast, or early dinner, the requirements for which were not wanting. For many days prior to this monster fête, mules and men, women and children, toil up the mountain with provisions. For miracle worker as she is reputed to be, Notre Dame du Font Romeu has not yet miraculously fed the multitudes who flock to her shrine. Besides the great houses which are depositories of food, long rows of tents offer physical comfort to the hungry pilgrim, and hundreds of peasants guard huge baskets filled with delicious grapes, peaches, nectarines, plums, and figs. You might fancy all London in motley was on the mountain top waiting to be fed; and, in truth, the population of a great city must be on Mont Odeillo on the anniversary of Notre Dame's fête day.

Preferring to eat *al fresco*, we set out on a foraging tour; and first we squeezed into one of the big houses in search of cooked meat. Entering a large room opposite the kitchen, we saw half a dozen men busily engaged serving eager applicants with the contents of capacious coppers filled with pieces of meat of various sizes. When our turn came to be served, we made

our wants known, whereupon the cook, glancing at the contents of the vessel, plunged a small pitchfork into a lump of beef, drew from the meat a wooden skewer, which he examined and thrust back again, and then informed us that the price was sixteen sous. This he learned by the number of notches on the skewer. Having bagged our beef, we next bought bread, butter, heaps of fruit; ten bunches of luscious grapes for four sous! and finally, a quarter skin of rich Roussillon wine. With these comestibles we sought a pleasant spot beneath the pines on the slope of the amphitheatre overlooking the plateau, and spreading our fare before us, made a repast which we little expected to be forthcoming at an elevation of nearly 7000 feet. Every available spot round the amphitheatre was occupied by groups of peasants in a great variety of costumes, discussing their provisions, which in many cases they had brought with them. Nor were the quadrupeds forgotten; these, decked for the most part in gay trappings, were tethered to the pine stems while they munched their corn. The plateau was thronged by an equally varied mass of human beings, the showmen being still especial objects of attraction, while dancing went on with unabated vigour. No pay no play, was the order of this part of the entertainment. For twenty

sous the musicians played for about the same number of minutes, a smaller sum failed to draw a note from them. When this amount was collected they struck up, and the men selecting their partners from a serried row of girls, bedizened with wonderful finery, among which gold lace was very conspicuous, led them into the dancing area. The dancers were more remarkable for agility than grace, the rustics being evidently proud of their saltatory powers. Here I saw the celebrated and singular dance *La Bayes*, which is an especial favourite among the peasants in Roussillon. The men open the dance by circling round with joined hands at a continually increasing speed. At a given signal the women join the men. The music now becomes wilder and quicker, and the dancers whirl round in a state of frenzied excitement. This continues for some minutes, when suddenly the men seize their partners beneath their arms and raise them as high as they can. The great feat is to hold up the girls seated on the palm of the hand, but in consequence of the robust build of the ladies, this *tour de force* can only be accomplished by powerful men.

It was painful to see amidst all this gaiety, a company of soldiers from the garrison at Mont Louis, who, with fixed bayonets, kept strict surveillance over the multitude. I was informed, however, by

more than one person, that a fête day rarely passes off without quarrels, not unfrequently of so serious a nature as to require the interference of the military. For, although the pilgrims inaugurate the day with religious ceremonies and pious promises, these are quickly forgotten, and under the influence of intoxicating beverages, quarrels arise between French and Catalans, which would terminate in much blood shedding if the combatants were allowed to use their long knives.

As the afternoon was now waning, we desired the guides to saddle the mules. This, however, did not meet with their approbation. They declared that they were well acquainted with the road down the mountain, and begged that we would tarry some time longer at the fête. But on consulting an excellent map of the district belonging to the Belgian, we saw that we had a long ride before us to Mont Louis, and remembering the rough way up the mountain, came to the conclusion that the descent would not be less rugged, and that it would not be wise to undertake the ride in the dark.

Repeating our orders, however, only called forth fresh remonstrances from our guides. In vain did we threaten them with a slender "pourboire," the fête had evidently turned their heads, and I began to

think that we should have to walk to Mont Louis, when matters were compromised by the Belgian's guide undertaking to proceed with us and bring back the mules, while my man remained behind. Had he not donned his holiday suit? and, although a benedict, he was not indifferent to the charms of the dance, or the jollity of the drinking booths. How he fared I cannot tell, but I venture to believe that his wife would have been better pleased had he gone down the mountain soberly with me, and returned to her with a good *bonne-main.*

In the course of our descent to Mont Louis, which led us through a noble pine forest, we overtook many companies of jolly pilgrims, whose erratic motions testified that their devotions had been made to Bacchus as well as to the Virgin. *Il y a un Dieu pour les ivrognes,* says the French proverb; and, certainly, some protecting influence seemed to shield these intoxicated peasants from harm in their frequent falls on the rocks.

The evening was fast closing when we entered the gates of Mont Louis. Though a frontier fortress, we passed the sentries unchallenged. Apparently large, Mont Louis is really but a hamlet as regards the civil population. The inhabitants number 300, while the garrison consists of 1300 artillery and infantry.

There is but one inn; and, as we expected, every bed was engaged. "But," said the landlord, who was doing duty as cook, "you may obtain beds at the priest's house." We waited on his reverence, who was kind and courteous; and after asking us a few questions respecting our country and calling, he desired the *fille* to show us his spare bed-rooms, adding that he left the benéfices to her. We had no cause to regret the plethoric state of the inn. The priest of Mont Louis is well housed, and his bed-rooms are clean and comfortable. The *fille* informed us in a very business-like manner that she never received less than a franc for each room, leaving it to be inferred that we were at liberty to pay as much more as we pleased. We were extremely fortunate, for a few minutes after we had taken possession of our rooms, a large party arrived also in search of accommodation, only one of whom could be taken in.

While supper was preparing at the inn, we strolled out, and examined, as far as we were allowed, the fortifications of Vauban. They are on a very grand and extensive scale, rendering Mont Louis a formidable guard of the passage into Spain by the Col de la Perche. The situation of the place is very striking: built on a mountain slope, at an elevation of 5400 feet above the sea, it overhangs deep valleys,

defiles, and gorges, which could be swept by the guns of the fortress. To the south the Pyrenean chain appears like a huge wall, and on the north you see a wilderness of lofty peaks, many crested with snow.

We found a motley company assembled in the eating-room of the little inn. All had been at the fête, and were, like ourselves, waiting the summons to supper. This meal tested the resources of the cuisine to the utmost, for it was no easy matter to satisfy the hungry guests. The company consisted principally of small Roussillon farmers, who stated that they considered it a duty to perform an annual pilgrimage to Mont Odeillo.

Smoking and card-playing followed the supper. The salon soon became opaque with smoke; so, not being a smoker, I left the inn with the intention of going direct to the priest's house. I had hardly, however, advanced a dozen steps when the Cimmerian darkness through which I crept was riven by an intense flash of forked lightning, followed by a succession of tremendously awful claps of thunder, which bellowed among the mountain peaks and gorges. A storm of the most sublime nature had suddenly burst on Mont Louis. Gaining an elevated position, from whence I commanded a wide sweep of the heavens, I witnessed for nearly an hour a continuous play of

forked lightning, which seemed to strike the mountain peaks, accompanied by rolling thunder.

The roar of nature's artillery was followed by torrents of rain, which quickly drove me to my sleeping quarters. I found the venerable *fille* half crazed with fright, and the Curé himself was apprehensive that the lightning would strike his house. Thunder-storms he said were of frequent occurrence during the summer months at Mont Louis, but he had witnessed few so severe as that now passing off.

I sat for an hour with him in his little study, sipping chocolate, while we chatted on various subjects. He was very desirous to know how many converts to his religion had been gained in England, and was much surprised when I declared my entire inability to give him the required information. His life ran in a very narrow circle, the religion he professed being his one engrossing thought. He believed in common with many French Priests that England would soon be a Roman Catholic country, and that the majority of Englishmen had embraced Popery. I endeavoured to disabuse his mind of this impression, but I think to little purpose. His great hope was that the revenues of the Protestant Church would be applied to the endowment of Roman Catholic establishments. Of these revenues he had magnificent ideas, and no

wonder, when he contrasted the living of an English Rector with his own modest stipend, — less than 20*l.* a year.

We now got on the subject of the worship of the Virgin, and were deep in argument when the Belgian joined us, and by his religious scepticism so thoroughly shocked the good Curé — who expected an ally, and found an enemy — that he suddenly rose and wished us good night.

CHAP. XXVI.

Down the Mountain. — Olette. — The Thermal Springs of Thuez. — Their Properties. — Geological Features. — The warmest Spring in France. — Focus of Thermal Action. — Sketching Scenes. — Villefranche. — Vauban's Fortress. — Keen-eyed Sentinels. — Templars in the Eastern Pyrenees. — Ancient Cartulary. — Curious Tradition. — Roussillon. — Aromatic herbs. — Bees. — Grapes. — The Wines of Roussillon. — Rivesaltes. — Prades. — Ancient Cloisters. — Thermal Springs. — Excursion to Vernet. — Corneilla. — The Mercadère Establishment. — Casteill. — Buttresses of the Canigou. — St. Martin's Abbey.

THE following morning was bright and beautiful. Though but little after five o'clock when we descended the stairs, the Curé was already up. He had ordered chocolate to be prepared for us, which was so strong and excellent as to remind me of that said to have been used by Roman Catholics on fast-days as a substitute for meat. Rigid Carthusians protested against this indulgence. The matter was referred to a bishop, who held that *Liquidum non frangit jejunium*, and so *theobroma*, as Linnæus called Cacao, is not banished from Roman Catholic houses on fast-days.

OLETTE.

There was no vehicle to be hired to take us to Prades; accordingly, when we had drunk our chocolate, and made the *fille* happy by giving her a five franc piece, we thanked the Curé for his hospitality, mounted our mules again, and were soon beyond the gates of Mont Louis.

The ride down the defile to Prades is thoroughly alpine. Interminable zigzags overhanging tremendous precipices, continue all the way to Olette, twelve miles from Mont Louis, while on your right rise the enormous mountain buttresses of the advanced Pyrenean range.

At Olette, you are made aware by trellised vines, fig trees, and golden gourds, that you have descended to a warmer zone. This small town is charmingly situated. A ruined bridge with a back ground of mountains, and a group of picturesque houses built in saucy defiance of all architectural principles, clinging with their terraced gardens to the hill side, form an exquisite subject for sketching.

If Olette were in the Western Pyrenees, it would soon become a place of consequence. For independently of the great beauty of the situation, there are abundant thermal springs at Thuez near Olette, possessing the various chemical properties of those we have already visited, with the additional peculiarity

of being not only the hottest in the Pyrenees, but, with one exception, in Europe; the temperature of the hottest spring here, being 171°. *

Bearing in mind the inadequacy of the springs at Barèges to meet the demand, and that a large proportion of the waters at Thuez have the medicinal characters of the famous Barèges source, which they also resemble by depositing Barégine; it is extraordinary that no attempt has been made to utilise the Thuez springs.

There is a remarkable geological feature connected with these first noticed by Professor James Forbes, in the "Philosophical Transactions." He discovered that there is a large patch of limestone insulated by granite, on which Villefranche is built, and that the springs of Moltig, Vernet, and Thuez, encircle this insulated portion of stratified rock, though they all rise in the granite. He also discovered that the immediate focus of thermal action is close to the Graûs d'Olette, a winding part of the road where there is a line of fissure, and it is precisely at this fissure that

* M. Arago states in the "Annuaire du Bureau des Longitudes" that "La plus chaude source thermale proprement dite qui nous soit connue, celle de Chaudes-Aigues, en Auvergne, marque + 80° centigrades = 176° Fahrenheit. This spring is of course uninfluenced by actual volcanic action.

the springs rise most abundantly. Near this locality there is a copper mine; and thus, as Professor Forbes observes, we have here an excellent illustration of the connection between intrusive rocks, dislocations, or fissures, metalliferous impregnations, and hot springs.

The locality of these remarkable springs, though near Thuez, is not easy to find; but my companion, who had heard of their abundance and virtues, proved a good pioneer, and under his guidance I saw them very well; and, contemplating the copious outpour, I willingly admitted that his scheme of erecting thermal establishments for invalids in the Eastern Pyrenees had full encouragement from the fact of there being an inexhaustible supply of healing waters in these mountains.

Judging by the breakfast set before us, Olette possesses a good inn; so, if you purpose crossing the Col de la Perche, the direct route from Prades to Puicerda, it would be wiser to sleep at Olette than go on to Mont Louis, where you may not be able to get accommodation even in the Curé's house. And if you are a sketcher you will be often tempted to pause between Prades and Olette; every turn of the road discloses scenes of great beauty. Villefranche, five miles from Prades, commanded by a majestic fortress,

the work of Vauban, situated at a great elevation on the mountain brow, ruined castles, the lovely wooded valley, and the rushing river Tet, are all objects which will gladden the artist's eye. Take care, however, not to set up your stool within sight of the keen-eyed sentinels of the mountain fortress; for here, as at Bayonne, the military authorities seem to regard your slender pencil tube with as much horror as you would behold that of a cannon, were it loaded with grape and about to be fired at you.

The whole of Villefranche, with its territorial dependencies, formerly belonged to the Knights Templars, who held considerable estates in the Eastern as well as in the Western Pyrenees.

The rapid spread of these romantic warriors throughout these mountains is very remarkable. From an ancient voluminous cartulary, containing nearly one thousand pages*, it appears that in 1129, when the Templars began to increase in Europe, two of their order arrived in Catalonia, and were very hospitably entertained by Berenger III. Count of Barcelona. He was so favourably impressed by the virtues and professions of his guests that he joined their order, and gave them landed possessions

* An abstract of this cartulary is printed in the 4th vol. of the second series of the Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Toulouse.

in Roussillon. These estates were soon occupied by their brethren, who acquired additional property, and in a very short time the order had extensive "commanderies" throughout the country.

The most important of these was at Masdeu, corrupted from Maison Dieu, which was richly endowed, and whose resident commander bore the title *Magister ad Mansionem Templi.*

The cartulary alluded to mentions ninety-three distinct estates held by the Templars between Masdeu and Perpignan, in which town they built a large temple fortress, where they kept their treasure.

The peasants throughout the Eastern Pyrenees, where the Templars resided, have a tradition that at the suppression of their order the lintels of all the church doors were suddenly rent asunder, and that wherever such a fracture appears the church belonged to the Templars. This tradition is based upon the belief that the Templars were tortured as well as deprived of their possessions, but there is no evidence to show that they were subjected to any bodily punishment in Roussillon. In the "Histoire de l'Abolition de l'Ordre des Templiers," express mention is made of the Templars in Bigorre frequently undergoing the terrible ordeal of the "question ordinaire et extraordinaire," but the chronicles are entirely silent respecting

any cruelty being practised on those in the Eastern Pyrenees.

A short distance beyond Villefranche, we enter the rich plain of Roussillon. We have the Pyrenees still on our right, but they become gradually lower as we journey east. They are dominated by the Canigou, a noble mountain which rises in an unbroken cone from the plain.

Although according to geographical limits Roussillon extends from the Mediterranean to Spanish Cerdana, the great fertility of the district is not apparent until you are near Prades.

Roussillon is a corruption of the ancient Ruscino, capital of the Roman colony. Later it became alternately attached to Spain and France, having been assigned to Louis XI. by John II. of Arragon; ceded by Charles VIII. to Ferdinand I., and eventually reunited to France in 1648 by the treaty of Westphalia.

The climate and soil are alike favourable to a southern vegetation. Wild thyme, rosemary, and lavender perfume the air*; the cactus, pomegranate, and aloe skirt the road, and a variety of fruit trees may be seen round the peasants' houses.

* The localities where these aromatic herbs grow are favourite feeding grounds of bees. The honey of Roussillon is greatly esteemed. 32,000 lbs. are annually exported.

But the great vegetable produce of Roussillon consists in its grapes, which become luscious and fat on the lower slopes of the Pyrenees, beneath the hot sun of this south latitude. Many of my readers have probably tasted Roussillon wine, but the "Roussillon" of London is, with few exceptions, like the port of the same city, doctored and made up for the market. However, "Roussillon" is by no means the best wine of this favoured district.

Ask at Perpignan for a bottle of Bagnol or Rivesaltes, and if the landlord be honest, you will taste a rare nectar. Hear what a high French authority says of the white Muscat wine of Rivesaltes: "Il est plein de finesse, de feu et de parfum, il embaume la bouche et la laisse toujours fraiche; et il est bien constant que ce vin est l'un des meilleurs de l'univers, lorsqu'il provient d'une bonne année et qu'il a vieilli."

We arrived at Prades at seven in the evening and dismounted before the door of a small but excellent inn, bearing the singular name of Hôtel Janvier. There is a balcony at the back of the hotel, shaded from the sun by projecting eaves, which was filled with lovely exotics. From this you have a grand view of the Canigou, and a range of inferior elevations of most picturesque forms.

Prades has nothing to interest the tourist beyond

the hot springs which bubble up in a garden opposite the Hôtel Janvier. They supply about a dozen baths situated within a most picturesque cloister rebuilt of the old marble pillars with quaint capitals, formerly belonging to the Convent of St. Michel, near Prades, destroyed during the great revolution.

My Belgian friend gave so glowing an account of Vernet at the foot of the Canigou, about nine miles south-west of Prades, that I willingly joined him in hiring a small carriage to visit the place. The drive is extremely beautiful. When you have threaded the galleries and crossed the drawbridges of the lower fortress at Villefranche, you plunge at once into the picturesque defile of Corneilla, leading to that hamlet. The gorge is watered by a brawling stream, which dashes down amidst moss-covered rocks and a variety of trees, from the roots of the Canigou. Presently the defile widens, bright green meadows, irrigated by little streamlets, occupy the mountain slopes, and passing through these, you arrive at the village of Corneilla, surrounded by chestnut woods and fruit trees. Higher the scenery is wilder, the mountains more lofty, the scars steeper, and you begin to see that the Canigou, which from Prades wears a smooth cone-like form, is set round with gigantic rugged buttresses. Nearly at the foot of these is Vernet, consisting of

three large thermal establishments and a few supplementary houses erected for the accommodation of visitors.

We stopped at the Thermes Mercadère, belonging to a person of that name, who combines the calling of bath-house keeper with that of hotel landlord. Visitors evidently were few by the welcome we received; for innkeepers are rarely prodigal of attention when their establishments are full. But if M. Mercadère calculated on having us for guests, his expectations must have been quickly put to flight when the four garçons, who rushed out to carry in imaginary luggage, returned empty handed. The messieurs had not then come to stay? Alas! for M. Mercadère — No; but there is no place in the whole range of the Eastern Pyrenees where a few days could be spent more agreeably than at Vernet; for the absence of those frivolous gaieties, indispensable apparently to the Frenchman, is a recommendation to this retired watering place.

The Vernet springs are celebrated for their curative properties. The hottest has a temperature of 132°. M. Mercadère, whose time evidently hung heavy on his hands, was very desirous that we should see his establishment; so when he had given the cook instructions to carry out our dinner orders, he con-

ducted us through the various rooms devoted to buvettes, baths, and sudatories; the latter on an extensive scale. The water is very sulphurous; M. Mercadère plunged a five-franc piece in a spring, and in a few moments the silver was black. The various springs are said to possess nearly the same properties as those at St. Sauveur and Barèges. Here is the analysis of the "Source du Torrent," from the Government official report.

1,000 grammes d'eau renferment:

1° Glairine	0,0140
2° Sulfure de sodium	0,0413
3° Carbonate de soude	0,1049
4° Carbonate de potasse	0,0093
5° Sulfate de soude	9,0183
6° Chlorure de sodium	0,0151
7° Silice	0,0490
8° Sulfate de chaux 9° Carbonate de chaux 10° Carbonate de magnésie	0,0050
11° Alumine, traces de fer	0,0010
TOTAL des composants	0,2579

One wonders that Vernet should not be extensively patronised; for, besides its thermal recommendations, the accommodation is very good, the bed-rooms are clean and airy, and the commissariat department is excellent.

I mention these facts, because Vernet is not as well

BUTTRESSES OF THE CANIGOU.

known as it deserves to be. At the period of our visit, the season being nearly over, the place was deserted; but M. Mercadère complained, that although he had expended a large sum of money on his baths and hôtel, in order to make them thoroughly efficient and comfortable, visitors, even in the middle of summer, were still few and far between. I fear, however, that the fortunes of these springs will only flow when means are devised to enable the French to be amused. For now that the railway is open from Paris to Perpignan, *viâ* Avignon and Montpellier, the journey to Vernet, though long, may be made without much fatigue.

When we had seen the "Thermes," we walked up the valley by a bridle path to Casteill, a small hamlet, about three miles above Vernet. Here we had the buttresses of the Canigou immediately before us. The grandeur of these mighty granite ribs is almost overwhelming. The Canigou was indeed brought forth amidst nature's most agonising throes. The convulsive action in this locality must have been tremendously violent; for the buttresses are rent, twisted, and fissured in the most fantastic manner. Tremendous precipices alternate with ledges garlanded by vegetation, and pines struggle for life amidst the clefts of rocks. Suspended on the verge

of a precipice are the ruins of the ancient abbey of St. Martin du Canigou, the dwarfed size of which enables you to form some idea of the magnificent scale of the mountain scenery; and high over all towers the dominant peak of the Canigou.

I had not gazed long at this wonderful scene before a strong desire seized me to ascend this mountain; for I thought that, when the lower portions presented the glorious scenery before me, the brow and crest must unfold many views of great magnificence. The longer I looked the more strongly did my desire ripen into determination; and although the Belgian, who was physically incapable of making the ascent, said all he could to deter me from the undertaking, I resolved to attempt it the following day. The information I received at Vernet was, on the whole, encouraging. "You can ride as far as some huts," said M. Mercadère; "sleep there, and ascend to the summit the following morning, returning to Vernet or Prades in the evening. But," he added, "do not attempt the ascent, on any consideration, if the weather be unfavourable." So, full of designs for the morrow, I returned to Prades, bearing with me a very pleasant remembrance of picturesque Vernet.

CHAP. XXVII.

Start for the Canigou. — Ride to St. Martin. — Legend of the Abbey. — Guifred Count of Cerdagne. — The Cabanes de Cadi. — A wild Charcoal Burner. — Glorious Sun-Set. — A Rough Lodging. — Mountain Fare. — Izzards and Wolves. — Restless Goats. — Climbing the Cone. — Ravines and Gorges. — Summit of the Canigou. — Geological Formation. — Val de Tech. — Prats de Mollo. — View from the Summit. — The Descent. — Return to Prades.

My first act on rising the following morning was to go on the balcony and look at the Canigou. The grand mountain was unveiled from base to cone. Indeed, so transparent was the atmosphere that, had not my excursion to Vernet made me acquainted with its mighty buttresses, furrowed by deep gorges, I should have deemed it but a morning's walk to the summit. All, however, who are practically familiar with mountains know that many, apparently easy to ascend, are often from their great steepness and peculiar formation like the drunken sailor's road — interminably wearisome on account of the endless tacks or zigzags which must be made to surmount a height of no very great altitude.

There was good promise of settled weather, so I resolved not to bid farewell to the Eastern Pyrenees without ascending the Canigou. At the recommendation of the landlord of my hotel I engaged a guide, who, he stated, was well acquainted with the mountain, and drove after breakfast to Vernet.* There I hired a couple of horses, and at one o'clock we set off for Les Cabanes de Cadi. The ride as far as the ruined monastery of St. Martin du Canigou is most picturesque, the path being carried through woods springing seemingly out of the rocks. A great variety of wild flowers, among which the purple anemone was particularly abundant, gemmed the ground. The situation of the monastery is very remarkable. The ruined convent hangs on the verge of a precipice about 400 feet deep, and is inaccessible on all sides but that by which it is approached. You are puzzled to guess even what could have possessed any one to build a religious house on such a spot. Legendary history attempts to satisfy your curiosity, asserting that the convent and adjoining church were built by a certain Guifred, Count of Cerdagne. The

* Although I had no great cause to be dissatisfied with my guide, yet I advise any one who purposes ascending the Canigou to engage a guide at Vernet. Two, who live there, know the mountain well.

Count, says the legend, killed his nephew for having, as he supposed, but unjustly, taken part with the Moors in a war between them and the French in the eleventh century. When aware of his fatal error, he made a pilgrimage to Rome to procure absolution from the Pope. This was granted, on condition that the Count promised to build a convent and church on the ground where his nephew had been killed. The Count, if the story be true, was not like the sailor who, when in danger of shipwreck, vowed that he would offer a wax-candle to the Virgin as large as the mainmast, and when safe on land very shabbily put the lady off with a rushlight; for, whereas Guifred might have built a small chapel, he erected a church and a convent for the accommodation of forty monks. The ecclesiastical establishment became a kind of hospice for shepherds, and the monks continued to exercise hospitality until their residence was destroyed in the great revolution, probably, say the local historians, by the very persons who had eaten the monks' salt. But however much we may lament that church and convent are in ruins, these harmonise far more with the surrounding wild scenery than prim white-washed structures.

The path, sound and good thus far, becomes rapidly worse above St. Martin, and eventually splits into

numerous tracks, among which you might easily become perplexed without a guide. After climbing about three hours, we arrived on the summit of the great ridge connecting the Canigou with the central chain of the Pyrenees. The latter part of the ascent to this ridge is so rough that I was in continual apprehension that the wine-jars, which the guide carried suspended by a strap from his waist, would share the fate of Gilpin's bottles, though not by his horse running away.

The view to the west and south, which had been continually expanding as we ascended, now comprised a vast area of billowy forms, swelling from plains and vales; but the declining sun, while, shedding a golden glory over the scene, rendered objects rather indistinct. The prospect to the north and east was entirely shut out by the mighty Canigou, which rose almost precipitously from the ridge.

In half an hour more we gained our night's quarters. They were not prepossessing, consisting of a couple of rooms, or sheds rather, in one of which we stabled our horses, and in the other ourselves. That intended for the bipeds, with the exception that it contained a couple of stools, a table, a heap of maize leaves, and a box which did the duty of a larder and general store-chest, was similar to that appropriated to the quadrupeds. The

owner of this hut, a shepherd and charcoal burner, was absent when we arrived, but a succession of far-piercing whoops from my guide, which woke the echoes in the ravines, brought him down from the neighbouring heights. He was a picturesque-looking fellow, clad in sheepskin, and wearing Spanish cow-hide sandals. Beyond his rough welcome his language was utterly incomprehensible to me, being apparently a mixture of corrupt Latin, Catalan, and various provincial dialects. Even my guide, though a native of Villefranche, declared that he had considerable difficulty in understanding his *patois*. He was accompanied by two dogs and four goats, which walked into the hut in a manner testifying their familiarity with its interior. The guide, knowing from experience that the charbonnier's larder was not likely to be well supplied, had brought provisions from Prades, and leaving him to unpack his wallet, I went out to see the sun set. The day had been very hot, and the sun, after running his course through a cloudless sky, disappeared behind the western heights in a mighty cavern of golden fire. Those who have had the good fortune to see such a sun-set in the south of France, will remember the almost overpowering glory of the spectacle, and those who have not may form some idea of it from Turner's picture of "Ulysses deriding

Polyphemus," in which the heavens seem on fire. But wonderful as is the painter's art, his canvas cannot embody the changing hues of the aërial panorama. For every moment the colours change, passing from the brightest reds to a violet glow, deepening at last into a purple gloom, covering the face of the earth. These last effects were particularly lovely on this occasion, and I may remark that the sun-sets in the Eastern Pyrenees appeared to me more remarkable for intense hues than those which I saw in the western chain.

On returning to the hut I found supper awaiting me, and had every reason to be satisfied with the catering of the innkeeper at Prades, who had not only provided excellent solids, including izzard, but also delicious Roussillon wine; so I supped well, and, bidding the guide put aside a small portion for breakfast, desired that the rest might be shared by himself and the charbonnier, who was evidently expecting to be invited to the feast. Tourists up the Canigou are rarely seen, and the advent of one with a well-filled basket of provisions, and the prospect of a few francs, was a great event in his existence. He had spent eighteen successive summers on the mountain, his habit being to descend to Valmania when the snow falls, and work at the iron mines during the winter.

His fare, while following the occupation of charbonnier, consists of rye bread and milk, varied at rare intervals by a slice of *rostes*, esteemed a delicacy by the Roussillon and Catalan peasants, but which we should pronounce uneatable: said rostes being intensely salt ham, fried in very rancid oil, and seasoned with garlic.

According to the charbonnier, izzards are abundant on the high peaks of the Canigou, and wolves even more numerous. But the latter are only seen during the winter, when they shelter in troops in the ruins of the convent St. Martin, making predatory incursions into the valleys when pressed by hunger.

Had the mountaineer been full of local lore, and easy of comprehension,—neither of which, however, happened to be the case,—I am afraid that I should have profited but little by his revelations; for whether that I was extremely tired, or that the Roussillon was more strong than usual, I cannot say, but I was overcome by sleep, and following on this occasion Franklin's economical advice, to go to bed when daylight fades, in order to save candles, I partly undressed, and throwing myself on the heap of maize-leaves, hoped soon to pass into the land of dreams. Whether the charbonnier and guide slept I do not know, but that the goats and myself obtained but little sleep I do know, for all night the restless animals

were astir. If you have ever passed a night in a Swiss châlet near these bearded beasts, you will remember how fond they are of nocturnal wandering.

It was just five o'clock when the guide roused me from a fitful sleep. My toilet was soon made, — no tubbing to be done here,—and having taken a drink of milk, we set off for the mountain top.

The morning broke full of promise. The great mountain masked the rising sun, but the crests immediately over Spain blazed with light, while wreaths of vapour hung heavy on the low grounds. The cone rose immediately before us, apparently a vast unbroken slope, but, like all great mountains, abounding in deceptions. For no sooner had we surmounted one ridge, than another appeared above us. The summit of the Canigou is in fact split on the west and south sides into a great number of cones or peaks, forming innumerable ravines and gorges, up and down which you have to scramble before attaining the dominant cone. No riding here, and so rocky is the trackless route that your chaussure should carry thick soles projecting rim-like, in order to protect the feet from hard knocks.

Many of the ravines were filled with snow, lying deep in places. To no mountain that I have ascended is the excellent counsel —

"Chi va piano, va sano,
Chi va sano, va lontano,"

more applicable than to the Canigou; for although the difficulties of the ascent have been exaggerated by French writers, yet it is sufficiently steep and toilsome to try legs and lungs, particularly if they have not had considerable mountain training.

On the north side, the Canigou, though not perhaps absolutely inaccessible, is so vertical that rocks cast loose roll down, until I really believe they only stop when they arrive at the base of the mountain.

At length, after five hours' scrambling, I had the satisfaction of standing on the top of the Canigou, and greater satisfaction, if possible, in seeing the mountain tops unveiled.

The summit of this mountain, which, according to the most authentic authorities, is 9,132 feet above the sea*, consists of a plateau 21 feet long by 10 feet broad, covered by loose stones. The south-west and east sides bristle with pinnacles, three of which rise nearly to the level of the culminating peak, and are separated by frightfully deep gorges; but the north face is, as I have said, an almost unbroken slope of dizzy steepness.

* No mountain in the Pyrenees has been described of such various altitudes as the Canigou. The height, according to different authorities, varies from 8,890 to 9,237 feet.

The Canigou represents the centre of the great granitic outburst, which occupies by far the largest area of primitive formation in the Pyrenees. For, while in the western chain the granite breaks out in small patches or bands, here it covers an extent of at least five hundred square miles. It appears a little to the west of Puicerda, extends east in an almost unbroken band to Ceret and Prades, reappears a little to the south of Ceret, and composes the last low Pyrenean ridges which dip into the Mediterranean at Cape Creux.

The only interruptions in the band occur in the Val de Tech, and in the vicinity of the Prats de Mollo, where the continuity is broken by tertiary or alluvial beds, and clay slate and transition limestone.

And now for the view. Dominating all mountains in the Eastern Pyrenees, from this lofty eyrie you see—if you are fortunate—the long Catalonian chain, the termination of France to the east, bounded by the Mediterranean*; the vast plain of Roussillon, dotted with villages; and to the west, billowy forms, crowned by the snow-covered St. Barthélemy. 'Tis a grand and perfect panorama, for there is no intervening peak to break the circle. Prades seemed

* Baron Zach, the celebrated astronomer, states that he saw the Canigou from Marseilles.

within rifle-shot, and with my glasses I saw the balcony from which I had gazed wistfully the preceding day at the cone on which I now stood.

I wished to breakfast on the plateau, but the cold was too great to enjoy the repast at so lofty an elevation; so having remained about half-an-hour on the summit, we descended to a more genial zone. If the ascent of the Canigou be difficult, the descent is far more so, requiring great caution and a steady head. Those who cannot look down precipices without unpleasant feelings would, I am certain, be considerably tried by various localities descending the Canigou.

Nothing worse, however, than a few scratches, resulting from two or three slips, befell me, and after having rested at our night's quarters for a short time, we mounted our horses and rode down the mountain, arriving at Prades in the evening. A bath proved very refreshing, but I felt for some days that I had made what the French call a "pénible" ascension.

CHAP. XXVIII.

To Perpignan. — The Farmers of Roussillon. — Ille. — Peaches. — Perpignan — Fort Castillet. — Vauban's Works. — The Fortifications. — Cathedral of St. Jean. — Cafés. — Military Gossip. — French and English Officers. — Desire for War. — Leave Perpignan. — The Journey Home. — Conclusion.

If I had not promised to rejoin my Belgian friend at Perpignan the day after my return from the Canigou, I do not think that I should have left my comfortable quarters at six A.M. to be shaken in a two-horse *malle-poste* for five hours.

The drive to this important frontier-fortress town over the great Roussillon plain presents few objects of interest beyond the teeming fertility of the soil. "Les fermiers de Roussillon ne fument pas," says a work on agriculture in this part of France; by which you are not to suppose, as an Englishman did whose knowledge of French was rather limited, that the farmers abjure tobacco, but they apparently have so high an opinion of the fertility of their land, that they do not consider manure necessary. The primitive condition of agri-

culture in Roussillon is, however, even more apparent by the almost universal adoption of the patriarchal practice of making the ox tread out the corn.

Beyond Ille, a walled town surrounded by gardens said to produce the finest peaches in France, the Pyrenees dwindle to hills, while the Canigou, unrivalled in height, towers like a giant in the west. The earth-heaves are now nearly over, and the last eight miles between Ille and Perpignan lie across a perfectly flat plain.

At the gates of Perpignan my passport was demanded by an official, scrupulously examined by three others, who retained the document; and I was desired to present myself at the police-office in two hours. This was not very agreeable intelligence, and I was speculating on the possibility of being detained, in accordance with some regulation connected with the fortress, when the Belgian, who was waiting for me at the Malle-Poste Office, relieved my mind by stating that the only object of the officials was to register my passport in detail, and embellish it with the arms of Perpignan. He was right: after breakfast, I regained possession of the precious document, and we then strolled through the town. This has a semi-Spanish character, being composed of Moresquish

balconied buildings, built for the most part of small pebbles. Awnings extend over the streets, affording a most welcome shade, in which half the population spend the day. Many of the inhabitants have a Spanish appearance, being descended from those Iberians who possessed Roussillon, of which Perpignan is the capital, until 1659, when the fertile district was ceded to France.

The Citadel, a vast fortification, built round the old fort, Castillet, still standing, is very imposing,—picturesque, too, from numerous crenelations, bastions, and tourelles. The mass is dominated by a lofty donjon tower, erected by the Kings of Majorca, but the fortress is indebted to Vauban's master hand and recent extensive works for its present great strength. As at Bayonne, so here, all seemed in war order, and, judging by the great number of soldiers passing in and out, the fortress must be fully garrisoned.

But by far the most interesting building in Perpignan is the Cathedral of St. Jean. The first stone, according to an inscription, was laid in 1324, by Sanchez, King of Arragon, and the building was completed in the reign of Louis XI. The interior is very striking; too much loaded, perhaps, with massive gilding, altar screens, carvings, and tapestries, but the effect of the whole is highly impressive. A

Spanish organ of great power and sweetness was played while we were in the cathedral.

We spent the evening in a vast *café*, blazing with light, and full of officers, happy for the moment over dominoes, cards, and *eau sucré*. Sitting within earshot of a group of loquacious warriors, more than once I caught fragments of earnest war-talk. How, cursing the monotony of country quarters, they longed for the summons to follow the eagles of France to conquest and glory. Indifferent to them the cause of quarrel; fighting was their trade, and they could only hope for professional advancement when the sword was drawn.

True,—and here is the great difference between the English and French officer. Not that the former has any disinclination to fight,—but his position in life is generally not of a nature rendering him absolutely dependent on his sword; whereas the French officer, being rarely in possession of private fortune, necessarily looks to professional advancement for independence; and this can only be rapid amid the chances of war. No wonder therefore that the legions of poor warriors who frequent *cafés* at the moderate expense of sugared water or weak lemonade, gladly welcome the trumpet-call summoning them to campaigns under their Emperor; during which, battles they trust may be as abundant and bloody as they

were during the reign of the gigantic carver of kingdoms.

I left Perpignan late at night, and when morning dawned the old Roman town of Narbonne was in sight. Of this and other noteworthy places in the south-east of France which I visited on my way home much might be said, but I forbear. Before, however, laying down my pen, let me assure the reader who has a holiday in prospect of eight or even six weeks, and is undecided where to spend it, that there is no tour in Europe so likely to yield varied enjoyment as that which will lead him to the shores of the Atlantic, then through the grand and lovely mountain land of the Pyrenees, and homewards skirting the Mediterranean, by the old towns of Provence, and along the banks of the arrowy Rhone. Let him, however, beware of passing a night at Cette, which is in the centre of the malaria district, for a fever might be the result of his tarrying in so unhealthy a locality.

THE END.

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